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WHEELS.

A BICYCLE ROMANCE.

BY

A. WHEELER.

NEW YORK.

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WHEELS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HATCHING OF A PROJECT.

"DEAR, oh, dear! I'm just weary of myself and every one else! No matter how lovely a thing is, it's passé in no time! Who cares for ice cream soda, pineapple punch, angel's food, or sunshine cake? We're satiated with them. And so with everything from a pink shirt waist to a blue dimity. As for reading, everything is decidedly flat and insipid, since poor "Trilby" and the "Heavenly Twins" have gone sailing in the "House Boat on the Styx."

"Why do you speak in this way, Helena? Have you not everything that heart can wish for—pretty hats and gowns, jewels, a horse and cart, and the finest wheel in Kansas City? What more could a young girl reasonably desire?"

"That's the trouble with me, Georgiana. I'm fairly surfeited with store-goods, and pleasures that money can buy; I want something new, and romantic, like being hypnotized by some fair Adonis. Now if Svengali had only been a handsome, likely chap, instead of such a perfectly horrid wretch, everything might have turned out lovely. Oh, say, Georgiana, I believe I'll fall in love with Paderewski, and ask him to marry me; its leap year, you know, and he's a widower. I'd rather have Salvini, Jr., or Pad-

erewski, than a live duke, any day, they wouldn't be so awfully monotonous, and pokey."

"Helena Morgan, I beg of you, do not say such wildly preposterous things!"

"What, as being hypnotized, or falling in love with that adorable Salvini, Jr., or marrying dear, divine Paderewski? Why, half the women in the land are worshiping these little gods, why not I? You'd like the divertisement yourself, or I'm mistaken."

"There's a difference between twenty-five and nineteen, Helena."

"Dif! Well I should say there was. You're actually getting rusty; way along in the 'sere and yellow leaf,' as it were. If you don't get a matrimonial hustle on you, Georgiana, I'll have

a valuable antique on my hands, and you know how I abominate old maids and cats."

"You needn't worry about my Angoras, Helena. You'll have plenty to keep you busy if you look after your own ducklings."

"And keep them out of my wild oat-field, eh? Well, that's clever, I'm sure. What do I care if I do appear uncommon and act on my advanced ideas? It's fun, I'm after, and I'm bound to have it. I actually feel exuberant now, and I can't tell for my life what it's about."

"I thought you were in despair a moment ago."

"That's a fact, Georgiana. What was I talking about? Oh, yes, ice cream soda, falling in love, getting married and a lot of other

idiotic things. Don't go ; please don't, Georgiana. I'm frightfully blue and nervous this morning. Do you think anything is going to happen ?"

" Probably will, in the natural course of events."

" But seriously, Georgiana, I'm greatly troubled. I had such a curious dream last night. I thought I was a fellow and that I was married to a woman. Now if that isn't a sign of death and reincarnation, I'd like to know what it does mean ?"

" Oh, you were simply exhausted from dancing, and then your late supper ——"

" As though that were an unusual circumstance. Not a bit of it, sister. Oh, dear ! I wish I knew to a day just how long I were

going to live. I don't want to play blind man's buff with life, and then be caught when I least expect it."

"Probably you're prepared to die any minute; your age would warrant it, you know, but I want to have fun up to within three days, that would give me plenty of time to get my celestial trunk packed. What's the matter with my getting my horoscope read by Professor ——"

"Helena, do be sensible, and try to quiet down. You're not happy for one minute, unless under some kind of excitement. You wish for this, and you wish for that; scarcely are your desires obtained, before your brain is hatching some new project. You can be so nice and agreeable at times, but when you get

into these restless moods, you just drive me out of my senses."

"I know I'm a regular freak, sister, but please do be patient. I verily believe there's something inside of me, like the Mephistopheles in Faust, just putting me up to all sorts of deviltry. Sometimes I feel like turning cow-boy, and riding a fiery mustang; again, I'm perfectly possessed to go up in a balloon, or elope with some languid-eyed Neapolitan minstrel; and now, I guess, I won't give away my latest aspiration. Oh, Georgiana, for the love of mercy, do give me a sleeping potion, or I shall be doing something to shock you frightfully."

"Helena Morgan, stop right where you are, and think where these idle fancies are leading you? Up to this time you have managed to

control this exuberance of spirit, but now I fear you are on the dizzy brink —— "

"That's it Georgiana, hovering on the brink of something, heaven only knows what. There's one thing glaringly apparent, I must have a decided change, or I shall be a total wreck."

"Can't you be happy in anticipation of our summer in the mountains?"

"Some of these spring days I feel as if I could, and then again, when I think of how we used to wheel down Ocean Avenue when we were at Newport last year—fairly fly through the air on wings, as it were—it seems as though we must manage to go where we can take our bicycles. Cycling would be just immense, if it wasn't for the abominable petticoats, and I

perfectly abhor bloomers. Say, Georgiana, but the boys must be in Paradise, sailing along in their knickerbockers and short jackets. If I were only a man ! Well, there's no use talking, I suppose, but that's my latest aspiration just the same."

"Now I want to understand you, Helena. Have you really decided that you do not want to go to the Catskills, as we have planned ?"

"I'm free to own, it doesn't strike me with any degree of enthusiasm. The fact is, I'm just dying for an out and out change. We've summered in the Adirondacks, hibernated in St. Augustine, been Newported, Saratogaed, and Long Branched ; Coronodo Beeched, and Yellow Stone Parked, until I'm actually cloyed of American resorts. As to expense, it's the

same thing wherever we go—five to ten dollars a day according to location. Our six thousand a year isn't any great layout, of course: but it was awfully sweet of dear papa to deal in that horrid pork, and then leave all his money for us to be happy on. That's what I call unselfish to the last degree! Now in justice to him, if nothing else, we ought to plan to get the largest possible amount of pleasure out of every dollar we spend."

"Quite philosophical and exactly true, Helena. What proposition have you to make?"

"That's what bothers me. I haven't the ghost of an idea where I want to go, or what I want to do."

"What would you say to a trip on the Continent?"

"Across the ocean? Horrors! I should die of sea-sickness, or be drowned. It just frightens me to death to think of it! And yet —what a strange move for us to make, though, after we have had it published that we are going to the mountains. How would Brother Charles like the idea, I wonder? He's about the only one we're accountable to, now that dear papa and mamma are both gone."

"That reminds me, I have a letter from brother relating to this very subject. Let me see, where in the world did I lay his letter? Oh, here it is, in the folds of my bodice. Read what he says, Helena."

"Would not advise your going to the mountains; a season at the Kaaterskill hotel would cost half as much as to go abroad, with fifty per

cent. less profit." ("Sounds just like a man, don't it?" observed Helena.) "Think it would be pleasanter for you to travel alone—parties at the outset are a darned nuisance." ("Naughty boy to swear.") "You will always find plenty of pleasant people going your way. Georgiana's travels in Europe will be an advantage, and as you both speak French and German, there is nothing in the world to prevent your having a fine time."

'Well, that's clever, to be sure. I wonder if he thinks that because he and his chum went half around the world on a wheel, that we can go and do likewise? I wish to goodness we could," said Georgiana, thoughtfully.

"Do Europe on a wheel! That's about what I call perfection in the way of novelty. But

there's no use talking, I suppose, our femininity, that is, our petticoats, present an insurmountable barrier. Oh, how I wish I were a man !"

" I quite agree with you, Helena, that cycling through Europe would be an excursion to enthuse the most stoical ; but it's impracticable, therefore, impossible."

" Don't clip my wings too suddenly, sister. Let me soar in the clear ether of my imagination a few seconds. The new-born idea is so delightfully fresh and jolly. Now, if we could only turn boys, what fun we might have ! You would probably prefer the young man sobriquet, but I should glory in being just an unaccountable, rollicking, happy-go-lucky boy, of my own irresponsible age."

" As I said before, I appreciate the spirit of

the enterprise heartily; but what is there to be done about it? We must submit to our fate and go as we are, or go not at all, Helena."

"That word 'submit' just kills me. 'Where there's a will there's a way,' it is said. Listen to me, Georgiana, I've got a scheme. Say we put on knickerbockers, take our wheels and go flying over the Continent as two fellows; you the young man, and I the kid, of course. We can stop in Chicago, and I bet anything that Blanche ——"

"That is quite far enough, Helena. Your Mephistophelian imagination must come down to solid earth. If you were in downright earnest, I should declare you were demented, to think of such a preposterous thing as donning male attire; but, of course, you're joking."

"Never was more serious in my life. We'll go as brothers, you can cut down your name to George, and I—let me see—what can I make of Helena? Some of those old Greek names, like Helios, or Helenus, Heliodorus or Hellianicus. If it was Helen-is-a-cuss, that might suit me."

"How perfectly dreadful you are, to think of such abominable things."

"Now what's the dif, whether one says Hellianicus, or Helenisacuss? A syllable more or less is never going to put one in sheol, I say! Now Greek names don't suit my style of stub nose. That's evident. Let me see, my middle name is Caroline, what can you make out of that, sister?"

"Why, Carl, of course, that is, if you were

going to adopt any masculine title; but it's absolutely out of ——"

"Come off, George, don't be saying things you'll have to take back. This is the way our names will look written, see! 'George Morgan, Carl Morgan.' Where shall we hail from? We'll put it Kansas, that's half the truth, any way. I'll write them again exactly as they'll look on the hotel register. Let's add an s to our last name, and call it Morgans.

"'George Morgans, Kansas, U. S. A.'

"'Carl Morgans, " " "'

"What do you want better than that for a complete blind?"

"It's the most dreadful thing I ever heard of in my life, Helena, but ——"

"Perfectly diabolical, I admit, but think of the dead loads of fun, Georgiana."

"The temptation is quite overpowering. The idea fascinates me beyond anything I have ever thought of before. There wouldn't be any special harm in it either, if we were very discreet."

"Case of have to, I guess, Georgiana. I wouldn't be found out for anything in this wide world."

"Nor I, Helena. Just think of the scorn and censure that would rain down on our poor innocent heads."

"Bother the scorn and censure! So long as we're not doing anything positively wrong, what's the odds, George? Come on, I say, let's do it."

"You must not expect my consent until I have considered the project well. Being older than you, everything will be laid on my shoulders. But that does not prevent our making plans, or rather looking over the details before embarking in the escapade. In the first place, we would have to cut off our hair."

"Oh, that would be a shame, wouldn't it?" said Helena, taking the shell pins from her wealth of golden hair, and letting it fall a sunny mass over her shoulders.

"Yours is so lovely, it would be ten thousand pities to sacrifice it; but I shouldn't mourn very much over mine. It's been crimped until it is all broken and uneven, any way. It would probably be a benefit to shear it off. But how would I look?" said Georgiana, holding the

curly, jet black locks close to her head, and brushing back the frizzes from her high, arched forehead.

"First-class, George; and as to the whiskers, it isn't the fashion to wear even a mustache, you know. You could rub on a little black pomade the middle and last of the week, or you might shave every day, that's the latest!"

"Shave, horrors! I wouldn't have to shave! What are you talking about, Helena?"

"Theoretically, not absolutely, of course. You mustn't get shocked at anything now, sister—brother, rather. We must begin to practice our rôles. Call me Carl, please."

"And those high, starched collars, and mannish linen we shall have to adopt for table d'hote, and dress occasions; and then to think

of wearing —— Oh, no, that is absolutely out of the question. I give up the whole thing right here, and now. I will not so humiliate myself.'

"But, George, we'll soon get accustomed to it. Rosa Bonheur wears panties.'

"Panties! That's the worst! Call them trousers, or pantaloons, and done with it. If one attempts to unsex themselves, let it be carried out with a bold spirit. If I go into this business at all, understand, I shall be a dignified, gentlemanly George Morgans, and back the fraud with the courage and audacity of a lion. This is the kind of a walk I shall affect. My voice is contralto, that's a stroke of luck. Good-morning, Carl; superb weather for wheeling, don't you know."

"You'll make the swellest kind of a chap, George; a hundred per cent. better than I will. I'm so much shorter, and then my shape is 'way off."

"There are just as many plump fellows as plump girls, what are you thinking about? Your figure is all right, Hel—Carl, I mean. What perplexes me is your small hands and feet, and those eyes. No young man ever had such girlish blue orbs as those!"

"I'll wear high russets, and keep my hands in my pockets when I scent danger from any quarter; as to my orbs, I'll wear colored nose glasses, if necessary. No little thing like that is going to spoil my fun. But look here, George, there's one thing that troubles me seriously, what brand of cigars are we going to adopt?"

"Cigars! We smoke! That is carrying the joke a little too far; I swear profoundly that I never will curse my womanhood by smoking, never!"

"Then you'll have to set up the beer, George. It will never pass if you work the moral racket too far."

"Iced tea, with a bead on it, will answer my purpose. I shall persist in being a model young bachelor. You can pose as you like. My habits and deportment shall be above reproach, whatever my appearance may stand for; no one can remark that I was not a gentlemanly lady, to say the least."

"That's all right for you, George; your superior age, university honors, and manly brow, bespeak gray matter, and great dignity;

but as for me, I must be a little swagger, or I can't play my part. I shall certainly smoke."

"Oh, Hel—! Carl, I mean ——"

"You must stop that profanity, George. Ha, ha, ha! It may serve your purpose to pose as a model young bachelor, but really you must swear off."

"Enough to make any one forget themselves. The idea of your saying that you would smoke."

"I'll start in on cubebs, George. But I tell you right here, that I'm going to be a regular up-to-date young swell. When I get to sailing in too heavy, you'll be there to call me down, George. Don't, for pity's sake, let me go on until I end up in the station house! Here, let me try on your glasses. I'll have to get me

a pair, as an orb deadener. How do they show off?"

"All right. You'd better be prepared for emergencies."

"How I wish we had our dress suits. I'm just dying to see myself in coat and trousers, and hear myself called 'Carl Morgans, of Kansas, U. S. A.'"

"Our dress suits! How are we to obtain these, I would ask? Helena Morgan, this whole affair is a purely chimerical undertaking. There is no more possibility of our being able to carry it out than to plan, with any degree of certainty, a journey to Mars. In the first place, how could we shuffle off the mortal coil of our individuality and disappear from the scene of action; or how enter the arena of existence

with no derivation, no parentage, and no acquaintanceship with the world? It was absurd for us to consider such an undertaking for a minute. It simply could not be done.'

"Don't be so positive, George. I have this whole thing worked out to a finish. We leave here presumably for the Catskills, stop at Chicago—Brother Charles leaves for his ranch in Idaho, to-morrow ——"

"Why, certainly. He said so in his letter, Helena."

"Very well. The coast will be clear for our project. We will confide our scheme to Blanche in perfect confidence. She can have our clothing made, supposedly for some distant relatives —country cousins living out of the city, you know —and carry out our programme to the end.

As to shuffling off femininity and donning masculinity, that's easy. We enter our brother's house as young ladies—we take our departure as two gentlemen—and who is the wiser? Blanche will not expose us, be sure of that."

"You're right there, Helena. We must bind her to absolute secrecy, however. She cannot even tell Charles."

"Well, I should say not. He would demolish the whole enterprise. No one in this world must be in the secret but Blanche, you and I, then no possible harm can come of it."

"Dear Sister Blanche, dear old chum of college days, as well, this is not the first secret between us! Yes, Helena, Blanche can be trusted. Our project is perfectly safe with her, and this means success for our escapade."

"Let us begin preparations at once, George. It is now the last of May. We must get off by the middle of June. Hurrah for Europe on a wheel!"

"I will write a book on our experiences when we return."

"Good for you, George, it will be a 'scorcher,' in bicycle parlance."

CHAPTER II.

A COMPACT WITH BLANCHE.

"BLESS my stars, girls! where did you come from this time in the morning?"

"Come from? Why, Kansas City, to be sure!" said Helena, rushing into her brother's arms, after the fashion of young sisters.

"Took the sleeper, you know, Charles, to avoid the dust and—How do you do, brother, I'm not very fresh to kiss, but ——"

"Why under heavens didn't you wire us? I'm just packed for Idaho, go in twenty minutes. Blanche! Blanche!"

"Yes, dear, I'm coming," called a sweet voice from the chamber above.

"Lay off your things, girls. Go up stairs, do anything you please. You haven't had your breakfast, have you? Blanche! Blanche, are you coming?"

"In just a moment dear. I'm looking for your brandy flask."

"That's packed an hour ago. Come down, quick, the girls are here."

"How's the baby, Charles? I suppose it's grown a lot since I saw it," asked Helena, as she removed her gloves, and unpinned her hat.

"Well, I should remark! He walks all around now, says daddy, and mommer, tante Ella, and tante Onna. Cute youngster! Go-

ing to have him out on the ranch breaking colts inside of two years."

"You sweet things! How perfectly lovely of you to come just as Charles is going," said Blanche, entering hurriedly, and embracing first one and then the other.

"Considerate, Blanche, to say the least," said her husband, twisting the flowing ends of his brown mustache mischievously, as he spoke.

"That was awfully selfish of me, Charles; you will forgive me, won't you, dear?" said the pretty young wife lifting her rosy mouth for a kiss.

"Just as sweet as the day I married her, girls, and twice as dear since the youngster came," said the model husband, holding the dainty, white-robed creature in his strong arms, kissing

her cheeks, and forehead and hair. "But I must be off, dearest. Good-bye, girls! By the way, what about Europe?"

"We're going, Charles," said Helena.

"That depends on circumstances," added Georgiana.

"Depends on yourselves, girls! Go I say, and God be with you! Sorry I can't be here to get you started, but Blanche will engage your state-room at the steamship office down town. Better attend to it right away, dear, no time to be lost at this season. Going on the Continent first, I suppose? Well, then, I would advise either the 'Fürst Bismarck,' or the 'Normannia'—twin screw, and everything first class—land you just where you want to go. Get off as soon as possible, so as to come

home before bad weather. Be gone about three months, I reckon? Awfully sorry to leave you, but good-bye, Helena. Good-bye, Georgiana. 'Bon Voyage.' Come, Blanche, I must see the boy a minute."

"Excuse me, girls, I don't want him to waken Roy. He didn't sleep over well last night."

"You're entitled to the last kiss. You needn't be so modest about it," laughingly rejoined Georgiana.

"Cable me when you get to Hamburg, girls," said Charles, taking his grip, and making his way hurriedly toward the hall.

"We may go to Paris first. Can't tell now what we will do," called Georgiana after him.

"Take care of yourselves, that's all. Have a good time, by, by! Come on, Blanche!"

"Don't worry, Charles. If we go by our programme, it's a clipper," said Helena, winking at Georgiana.

"Tell us all about it when you get back. Sorry I can't see you off, girls. Good-bye, good-bye," said Charles, kissing them in a brotherly way, and then putting his arm lovingly about the waist of the little woman, who was chief in his affections, as he disappeared.

"That's what I call a stroke of luck, that we should happen here just as Brother Charles is going, George."

"True, Helena, as regards our project. I'm inclined to think, however, on sober second thought, that we may conclude to abandon our foolhardy undertaking. If Sister Blanche dis-

courages it in the least degree, then the whole scheme goes overboard, I say."

"Agreed, George."

"You unfold our plans, Helena, show her the disadvantages, and point out the difficulties we must encounter."

"Not much. I'll state the affirmative, that's my natural side of this question. Tell her what a lark it will be, and show her the dead loads of fun there is ahead."

"I'll take the negative, then, and after we have exhausted our eloquence for and against, she shall decide which side has it. Very well, I'll agree to that. Here she comes now," said Georgiana.

"Come right out to breakfast, girls," said Blanche, drawing back the folding doors which

led to the breakfast-room. "Helena, you sit next to me ; Georgiana, you'll have to play man in Charles' absence. Take his arm chair, and assume the honors, please."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a capital starter, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he! Why, Blanche, I didn't know you were a telepathist!"

"What are you referring to, Georgiana? and what are you both laughing at?"

"Ho, ho, ho! Play man, eh, George? Isn't that immense? Te, he, he!"

"Started in sooner than I expected, but it's well to get in practice. What will you have, ladies?" said Georgiana, in a gruff voice, straightening up.

"Helena will be served with strawberries, I presume," said Blanche, somewhat disconcerted.

"Strawberries, yes, George. There, you've dropped one on the tablecloth! Isn't that like a man, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm doing my part just lovely —there goes another! Have some berries, Blanche? I declare, the blamed things are bound to get away from me."

"Help yourself, Georgiana. I've had breakfast, you know. Helena, have some of the sugar?"

"Oh, Blanche, if you only knew how really pat it was. Ha, ha, ha! Te, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed Georgiana.

"Do eat your strawberries, and stop laugh-

ing. You act perfectly idiotic, I declare," remarked Blanche, reddening.

"Pardon, us Blanche, we do act very rude, but when Helena explains you will join our merriment."

"Have more of the cream, Georgiana. I am certainly very anxious for an explanation. Help yourselves to wafers, won't you? Mysteries just kill me by inches," said Blanche, coldly.

"Well, Blanche, to start with, you heard us telling Brother Charles that we thought of doing Europe this summer," began Helena.

"Yes, yes, I was just going to ask you about it. Quite sudden, isn't it? I supposed you were going to the Catskills."

"Brother Charles suggested Europe in his

letter to us, and that set us thinking. We have got up a little novelty in the way of travel, that we are going to lay before you," began Georgiana.

"And it will all depend on you, Blanche, whether we cross the ocean, or stay on dry land. Do you see?" remarked Helena.

"With me? How very mysterious you both are. As though I had anything whatever to do with your arrangements."

"You have everything, Blanche; and now I will explain. You know that both George and ——"

"What has gotten you into the habit of calling her George? I don't like it one bit, it sounds so mannish," said Blanche, scowling.

"Ho, ho, ho! Mannish, George! Isn't that

too funny? You must excuse me, Sister Blanche, but you just about convulse me this morning, by your pat allusions!"

"Pat allusions! That's clear and clever, I must say! Now look here, girls, if you don't tell me ——"

"We're going to, Blanche. As I was saying, you know that both George and (excuse me, but I must call her that, as will appear later) and myself are addicted to the habit of wheeling, and we've been thinking that a trip through Europe on our bicyc——"

"Just the thing, girls. You have my consent ot once. Why, Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Carter, their son and daughter, and two young ladies from the West Side, besides Mrs. Edward Les-

lie and her two sons, are going. I must certainly get you girls into their party."

"That will never do, Blanche. We want it kept strictly private. By-the-way, George, that gives me an idea. We never told Brother Charles that he must not speak about our going to Europe. It will never do in the world to have him leave the city without knowing. One of us must go down to the station at once."

"I should say so, Helena, there is not a moment to be lost. I will take the very first car," said Georgiana, rushing from the table, and getting into her jacket.

"Here, Blanche, you tuck in her sleeves, while I run out and stop the car!" said Helena, plunging out of the door and down the steps in breathless excitement, Georgiana following,

jabbing her hat pin right and left, and then pulling on her gloves, while she held her purse between her even white teeth.

"I never saw anything equal to this in my life, the way you girls are behaving; leaving your breakfast half eaten, and rushing around in this mad fashion," remarked Blanche, standing in the open door, as Helena came flying up the steps, after seeing her sister on the cars.

"Blanche, don't get out of patience."

"Out of patience! Why, Helena, you're enough to drive one out of mind, the way you and Georgiana are going on."

"I know, but when you hear all about our plans, you'll not marvel at our excitement. Why, it frightens the life out of me, when I think of our hairbreadth escape! Mercy me,

but it was a close call! Maybe the train may start now before she gets there! What if it should? Oh, dear, what if something should happen to the grip? We'll have to wire him then, that's all."

"Now, Helena, when you get your breath, I beg of you to explain this horrible, blood-curdling mystery! What in the name of all the possibilities are you going to do? I actually believe you two girls are out of your senses."

"You're not far astray, Blanche. Upon my word, that gives me a pointer. If anything should happen—that is, if we're discovered, you know—you'll swear we acted strangely, won't you, dear? So as to prove our insanity—that's a darling."

"Helena Morgan, I never ——"

"Wait Blanche, until I get at my strawberries and cream again, and then I'll tell you the whole scheme. Poor George, it's too bad she had to leave this nice breakfast!"

"Eat slowly, we won't have the waffles and syrup until she gets back. I'll ring for more hot coffee before you begin. Won't you have another dish of berries? Set the coffee here, Bridget. Now I am all ready to listen. Hope Roy won't wake up for an hour yet."

"Well, Blanche, to make a long story short, we've been thinking quite seriously of going to Europe on our wheels, and wearing knickerbockers."

"There's nothing startling about that. Mrs. Solomon Carter wears the bloom——"

"But you don't understand me, Blanche.

George and I are going to wear male attire, and pass ourselves off as two ——"

"What, two fellows? You don't mean to tell me that you have grown so degenerate as that, Helena Morgan."

"I know it's perfectly shocking, but ——"

"Goodness, what a chance for fun! I wish I were going with you! Whatever put such a thing into your head? I don't wonder so much at you, either, but Georgiana! Soul and body! but how did you ever manage to draw her into the scheme?"

"George always would be a leader in society, you know, and everything in the new woman points to pantaloons, don't you think so? What's the odds whether one wears knickerbockers or full dress suits? When the Christian

women don the claw-hammer, white vest and stiff shirt, to sing negro melodies to the glory of God; and the leading ladies adopt bicycle breeches, what's wrong with wearing this and that together, and having a little fun, I say?"

"But Charles must never know it. He's awfully down on anything in the bloomer line. Oh, I see now what the matter was with you and Georgiana."

"To be sure! It must be a dead secret between we three. Let the people think we are going to the mountains. We can be lost to our friends for three months, that is, if Charles and you will stand by us. Promise, Blanche, that you will never divulge our secret, to your dying day."

"Never will, unless it is for your benefit. That might happen, you know."

"Impossible! Won't you promise, Blanche?"

"I will never divulge your secret unless compelled to in order to protect your honor. Believe me, Helena, and I will help you in every possible way."

"Go down and order our suits, and buy our knickerbockers, Blanche?"

"I can't do that. Every one knows who I am. It would be impossible, I fear."

"Say they are for some country cousins who have sent their measures by you, and so forth."

"You'll do, Helena. That scheme is worthy of the original schemer. Here comes Georgiana now."

"Did you make it, George?" asked Helena,

springing up from the table, and grasping her sister's hand, ecstatically.

"To be sure I did! And Charles was perfectly lovely. Said he wouldn't breathe a word, but thought it awfully queer why we wished to keep our European trip such a profound secret, ha, ha! You've told Blanche, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have finally had my curiosity satisfied; and I must exclaim that for a genuine lark it beats anything, Chicago not excepted."

"Kansas City ahead, eh? Well, that's good. Now for the verdict which makes us or unmakes us. Blanche, do you advise our going?"

"That's putting it in a new light, Georgiana. I cannot say that I advise such a wild adventure, but you have my consent, and I will do everything I can to further the expedition. More-

over, I will keep your secret and do everything in my power to protect your honor, should any trouble arise."

"That's all we want, George; it's a go. Europe on a wheel, hurrah!" Saying this Helena seated herself at the table and began eating her breakfast for the third time.

"I wish we could shift the responsibility of this escapade on some one's shoulders; but we'll have to bear it ourselves, Helena," said Georgiana, throwing her gloves on a chair, as she resumed her seat at the table.

"Well, I wish you any amount of fun, and a safe return, dears. As I was saying to Helena, I wish I were going with you," said Blanche, pouring the coffee into the prettily decorated cups, as she was speaking.

"If we fail, and are discovered, Sister Blanche is going to swear we are lunatics. That will let us out in great shape, George."

"Will you do this, Blanche? I mean seriously, now," asked Georgiana.

"I most certainly will, and not violate the truth either, ha, ha!" said Blanche, good-humoredly.

"Hurrah for George and Carl Morgans, U. S. A.!" said Helena, waving her teaspoon over her head.

"Hurrah for Sister Blanche!" continued Georgiana, whirling her coffee-cup about her head in like fashion.

"Hurrah for the very latest in new women! and God speed them," responded Blanche, giving each her small white hand, as a token of her compact with them.

CHAPTER III.

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

"LOOK at those large birds flying about the ship, George. What can it mean?" said Carl Morgans, peering out of the port-hole of his state-room on the seventh morning after leaving Sandy Hook.

"They are sea-gulls, no doubt. We must be getting in sight of land. Step aside, Carl, and let me look out. Sure enough, we are at Land's End, in the very mouth of the English Channel."

"Hurrah for England! three cheers for the Queen! We had better hustle up and get out

on deck, George. Glory, but I'm glad to think I'm alive. I'm heartily sick of this horrid, old, dizzy ship, and this mussy little state-room. The sight of the green earth will beat anything they've got over here in the shape of show-business. Where's my Rob Roy four-in-hand? Say, George, these shirt sleeves are so long the cuffs hang over my finger ends. Men's arms must be as long as telegraph poles. I've struck an idea. I'll slip my other pair of silver clasped garters over them and—mercy me, they're a mile too large."

"You're the worst, Carl, to exaggerate!"

"Well, four inches, then. I won't take a sixteenth off from that. Here, George, shove up this slide a little; tighter yet; there, that feels better. Oh, everything hangs so. I think

men's clothes are the worst! I'll tighten up this suspender a notch—rip—there goes a button! It beats Richard the Third, how everything acts. George, where under the sun, moon and stars did you put that paper of safetys? I'm literally coming apart in every joint of my rigging. I feel so horribly loose and no account in these affairs. The only thing that would make me feel at all chic, would be to hang myself by the backs of these suspenders to that hook there on the wall, and sort of get pulled together once more. Wouldn't I look a fright, though? Just imagine me, George, a regular Japanese doll figure, ha, ha!"

"Some inconveniences we have to put up

with, I'll admit, Carl, but on the whole the novelty quite suits me."

"I never had so much fun in my whole life, all put together, as during the past week, and then to think, its only just beginning!"

"How does my dark coat and vest look over these gray pantaloons, Carl? I thought a little change, as we were about to disembark, might be in order."

"You look immense, George. No one would ever suspect you. Behold your Lawrence Barrett features, your quite proper air, and perfectly respectable appearance. As a young lady, you always impressed me as being a little coarse and angular, but as a gent—you're right in it, by my soul you are."

"Glad I impress you so favorably, but Carl,

look here, you *must* stop using so much slang. Any one would think you were brought up in a bowery."

"Can't help what *they* think, George, that's the only way I can keep to my part. I must be swagger, or it's all game with me. I'm going to swear off on caramels and chocolates, and smoke about three more cigarettes a day. Got to do it, or I'll be caught sure."

"You have such perverted ideas about men; think they must debase themselves in order to appear natural, while I maintain that ——"

"Come off, George, no use preaching to me. You tend to your part of this little drama, and I'll get my cue all right. I'm working this racket for the fun there is in it, and nothing short of a patrol will stop me now. Say, but

it's rich, the quite pitiful way the ladies have of looking at me ; as much as to remark, "Naughty boy, what a trial to his brother." Didn't you observe how tenderly Mrs. James Montgomery Fayette Browne laid her large, fat hand on mine last evening, and looking into my face, with her pleading brown eyes, begged of me not to light that pernicious cigarette. She's immense in more ways than one, and I'm going to pretend that I am desperately in love with her, just to make her husband jealous. Wouldn't that be sport, and not a shadow of harm in it either."

"Carl Morgans, how ungrateful, when Mr. Browne has so kindly invited us to join party with them for a bicycle trip, wherever it may suit our fancy to dictate. They are such a devoted couple, and so highly bred."

"Oh, yes, you'd better talk. It would be all right, and you know it, for me to play lover as much as I liked with Mrs. B., but for you to go chumming it with Browne—that's a kitten of another color."

"Why shouldn't Mr. Browne and I enjoy ourselves in the eminently proper relationship of friends, I would ask? I see no harm in our taking a run on our wheels, now and then, or even going out to the theatre together, provided Mrs. Browne was indisposed, and you did not care to make a third one to the party."

"George Morgans, have you forgotten that you are a woman?" asked Carl, his eyes flashing.

"When I donned male attire, all the woman in me took flight, and I became metamor-

phosed, until there remains in me not a vestige of my former state of being. I possessed myself of that ruling mentality which asserts itself over material conditions, repeating to my lower nature, I am no longer what I deemed myself. I am a man, therefore I must speak the words and have the manners of a man. And, presto! as I thought so did I appear! Say you now that there is anything out of the line of propriety for me to become the intimate of J. M. F. Browne?"

"George Morgans, I think you are perfectly diabolical. I feel just as much like a girl as I ever did, and if you persist in this kind of fool talk, I shall absolutely refuse to share my state-room with you. I like fun, but not to the extent of ——"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's capital, Carl; but as it looks all right for us to associate, we won't part just now, ha, ha! It's the way people regard us that we must look to, and for this reason I would advise you not to be too sweet on Mrs. B. It won't do, Carl."

"There's no harm in my having a little quiet flirtation with the aforesaid, and if she grows sweet on me, you won't get Browne fifty feet away from his adorable, and that suits my scheme all O. K. It may foil your plans, George, but I'm bound by my honor as a gentleman to protect the sanctity of this household. If Browne gets jealous, when one goes to the theatre, all go, and it will be the same about wheeling."

"Your're accommodating, I must say, Carl,

but never mind. We will do the proper thing, of course, but to tell you the honest truth, I think Browne is about the handsomest, cleverest fellow I ever met, and if he wasn't married—well."

"But *he is*, George, so that's all there is about it. Your flirtations might make mischief, mine cannot possibly do a particle of harm. But here we are talking and fussing, when we ought to be on deck. Hurry up, can't you? Hand me my cap, please."

"Listen, Carl, somebody is knocking at our door, probably the steward. I'll open it. We're ready to go out, any way. Why, Mrs. Browne, is it you? You here, too, Mr. Browne?"

"You two lazy fellows are sleeping away the

best part of your lives. We're just past Land's End, and running for Lizard Point."

"George has been poking horribly this morning, a regular old bach, if there ever was one," said Carl.

"Now that's not the case at all. It's all Carl's fault, he's as fussy as a girl."

"I will take your part, Carlos dear. You are altogether too impetuous to be fussy. Now haven't I the best of the argument, Mr. Morgans?"

"Seeing that you are the only lady in the case, I must ——" began George.

"Oh, don't mention it, Mr. Morgans. My size quite absolves you from any gallantry usually directed toward the weaker sex. Now, Carlos dear, being the youngest, naturally claims

our protection, and really has become quite a pet of mine. Isn't it so, dear?"

"Thanks, you are very nice, but perhaps Mr. Browne might ——"

"Nonsense, boy, Dubby's got to have something to take the place of the pug, and I'm willing to divide up."

"Now, Hubby, that wasn't a bit nice. Of course, I'm very fond of my dogs, but Carl understands that my regard for him is quite of another nature; more spiritual, I might say."

"Dubby's very fond of spirits—that is, ghosts."

"Well, I'm no ghost, that's certain," objected Carl.

"Hubby is so unfortunate in his selection of terms. Now if he had stopped at spirits, any

one might have thought me intemperate; and ghosts, why that calls up a ghastly array of predecessors—grandmothers and great-grandmothers, grandfathers and great-grand——"

"Hold on, Dubby, I swear if you're going to name all the skeletons from here to Adam, we might as well give up the ghost first as last."

"Why, Mr. Browne, how witty," said George, laughing.

"Pardon me, Mr. Morgans, but I never praise Hubby's witticisms and puns; it's hard enough to manage him in his most humble and abject state. I tremble for the result when he discovers his potential. That will be a lamentable day for me, Mr. Morgans. Carlos dear, would you mind my taking your arm? I think we might be excused and go out on deck

the air is quite oppressive. Your brother and Hubby can follow at their pleasure."

"Don't be in such a hurry, Dubby, some things have got to be settled right here. Have a cigar, Morgans. You generally prefer a cigarette, Carl, but take a royal Havana, it will brace you up in great shape. Now, what I was going to have decided, is this, whether we are to go on to Hamburg, and give Germany a whirl, or get off at Southampton and ship by steamer to Havre, and thence by rail to Paris."

"What does Mrs. Browne suggest? She will not waive her right to decide this question, surely," said George, holding the cigar awkwardly between his fingers, and casting a timid look in its direction as he spoke.

"Speak up, Dubby. Shall it be France, or Germany, as a starter?"

"Carlos, dear boy, won't you tell us what your pleasure would be?"

"Whatever would be conducive to your happiness," began Carl.

"Oh, dear, wasn't that very sweet? But now, seriously, I want to know your own cunning little wish. Shall it be France, or Germany, Carlos dear?"

"France, first, last and all the time. Hurrah for Paris, and the white boulevards!" said Carl, giving his foot a funny kick, by way of emphasis.

"France first, then Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, England, home. Is that the programme, Dubby?" asked Browne.

"With a pinch of Scotland and a nip of Ireland, that will do, Hubby."

"Here goes for getting our baggage transferred, then. Come on, Morgans, we'll attend to details, while Dubby and Carl get a sight at the shipping. England shows off finely as we approach Southampton," said Browne, leading the way to the cabin deck.

"So this is the British Channel. Well, I can hardly believe my eyes that we are really across. Isn't it a lovely spectacle to view these magnificent vessels and beautiful, white-winged yachts, careening about. It almost makes me wish I were not a woman, so as to be able to man one of these sweet ships," said Mrs. Browne, as she swung her voluminous umbrella-skirts, and displayed her quite conspicuously broad person,

while gesticulating right and left on the imposing scene before her.

"Hurrah, Morgans, let's go down and see to those trunks, so we can have breakfast. I'm as hungry as a shark. This breeze whets a man's appetite as keen as a razor, and I've been up banging around for two mortal hours," said Browne, starting to go.

"Now, Hubby dear, think of me, how my poor sides have been pinched into a jelly. Those berths were made for slabs, instead of human beings, I say."

"Then we're all slabs, Mrs. B., save you ——" began Carl.

"Until we boarded this vessel, then we became lumber," interposed Browne.

"Now, wasn't that very clever? What were

you going to say, Carlos dear? Hubby shall not interrupt you again. It was something very nice, I know."

"I was going to add that none of the rest of us had complained of too much squeezing. I admit I rather like it," said Carl, putting his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and holding the unlighted cigar languidly between his dainty fingers.

"That sounds just like a girl," said Browne, halting.

"I don't know why you should say that, Mr. Browne," said Carl, blushing.

"Merely a notion I've got about the gender of words; now, squeezed seems feminine in an eminent degree, while squeezer is undeniably

masculine, that is, it looks that way to me," replied Browne.

"Don't mind Hubby, Carlos dear, he's color blind, can't tell green from blue, nor sweet from sour ——"

"That accounts for my lack of taste in marrying you, Dubby."

"That's one of Hubby's compliments. He's very considerate for others. It isn't any wonder I adore him, the gentle partner of my bosom," sighed Mrs. B., wiping a tear from her fat cheek.

"I think you're abused, Mrs. B., and if I was big enough I'd just make your husband sorry that he hurt your feelings and insulted me, by saying I talked like a girl, so," said Carl,

speaking in a low voice as he moved close to her side.

"Hel—Carl, you had better be careful what you say," said George, who had been listening to the above remarks.

"And you'd better be careful how you swear in company, George," retorted Carl.

"Stop quarreling, everybody. You're all hungry, that's what's the matter," said Browne, smiling.

"I guess you're about right, Browne. We'll get our baggage attended to, and then ——" began George.

"Eat, well I should exclaim!" said Browne, linking arms with Morgans, and going to the rear of the steamer.

"I'm awfully glad they're gone. Somehow

your husband makes me terribly nervous," said Carl, pouting his rosy lips, as he confidingly slipped his hand under cover of Mrs. Browne's expansive sleeves, and strutted beside her to the extreme bow of the ship.

"Fayette is horribly matter-of-fact, and don't seem to appreciate the highly wrought sensibilities of my finer nature. When I was at home I had dear Brother Percy, and my dogs, but now if I didn't have you, I should be lonely indeed. Do you know that I am getting alarmingly attached to you, Carlos dear? Just think, I have known you but five days, and yet 'eternity could not efface your image from my heart,' as the poet has feelingly remarked. My love nature is positively starving."

"One would never suspect it from your general appearance, dear Mrs. B.," said Carl, glancing at the high chest, which rose and fell near enough his face to suggest a comfortable nap, and pleasant dreams."

"That is my misfortune. I appear so large and self-contained that it never occurs to any one to offer me a grain of loving sympathy. Now your hand on my arm seems just heavenly. Don't take it away, please. You seem, somehow, more like a daughter, a sweet seventeen-year-old girl, than a boy. I declare if it wasn't for those old cigars, and cigarettes, and the smell of smoke about you, I should have to check myself from calling you Caroline, instead of Carlos."

"Really, now, Mrs. B., I don't think that a

bit complimentary. If there's anything I abominate, it's a Miss Nancy, namby-pamby, milksop, sort of chap. I didn't like it any too well to be named alongside the pugs in your affections, but ——"

"Carlos, Carlos dear! Now that is too bad that you have been so wounded in your tender little bosom by my thoughtless words. Why, you are on the very pinnacle of my love, not lower than the roof garden of the Masonic Temple, while the poor dogs are in the basement, so to speak. Does the ratio of that proportion ease your tender, suffering heart, Carlos dear?"

"The dog account is all settled, but the girl business is what works me up into a high fever.

If we're going to be friends, that talk will have to cease."

"I won't be naughty any more, and if you can't return my affection, Carlos dear, in the same Masonic Temple proportion, let me know that you have a Potter Palmer residence feeling, or even a Hyde Park Station regard."

"You know Chicago, then, Mrs. Browne?"

"Certainly, dear. I was in the Hall of the Beauties—the world's great beauties, Carlos dear!"

"Now I know you're stuffing me, Mrs. B.! As though you were on exhibition at the World s Fair. Nonsense!"

"You do not have a very exalted idea of my charms, dear boy."

"Oh, yes; I like your looks immensely."

"Immensely! Very good. Appropriate to my style. But I will correct your misunderstanding; I was in the Hall of the Beauties, but did not pose, Carlos dear. No, I did not pose, but I would like to propose."

"But your husband, Mrs. B.?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I forgot all about Hubby darling. Here he comes now. Seems to have taken a desperate fancy to your brother. Well, I'm heartily glad if they're having a good time."

"But what if it were a girl he was devoting himself to, Mrs. B.?"

"That would be perplexing! But to drown my sorrow, I would straightway get a divorce, and make a Leap Year proposition to you, Carlos dear."

"Mrs. Browne, how dare you talk so? You cannot mean what you say."

'Don't be so horribly serious, dear boy. Life's a stupendous joke, you know. You're a joke, and your brother's a joke, and I'm a joke, and Hubby dear ——"

"Yes, Dubby, what's wanting?" said Browne, coming up.

"Ha, ha, ha! Carlos and I have been thinking of the joke on you."

"On me? What the devil is it?" asked Browne, curiously.

"Married life, Hubby, ha, ha!"

"That's the most brilliant thing you ever got off in your sweet life, Dubby Browne. But I say, Hurrah for breakfast! Morgans, there, is as pale as a sheet, and I'm just ready to collapse.

Come on, I say," remarked Browne, slapping his wife in no very gentle manner on her broad, fat shoulders, and roughly clutching her arm, as they led the way into the spacious dining-hall.

CHAPTER IV.

BOIS DE BOULOGNE.

"THE morning is perfection, Browne."

"Everything is perfection in Paris, Morgans. Look at these pavements. They're positively immaculate, as smooth and white as marble. What a brilliant idea struck us to bring our wheels."

"And what fortune favored us in meeting these delightful young men, I would add," said Mrs. B., mounting her wheel gracefully, despite her size.

"Thanks, Mrs. Browne. I think good fortune was equally vouchsafed to us, in that we

were the recipients of your kind invitation to join you in wheeling," remarked George, riding up to the side of Mr. B., who was striking out from Place de la Concorde to Bois de Boulogne, by way of Champs Elysées, through the Arc de Triomphe.

"That's what I say. It was the greatest stroke of luck our meeting with you people. It would have been horridly dull going about alone," said Carl, wheeling alongside Mrs. Browne, as they fairly flew over the beautiful Champs Elysées, and soon emerged into Place de l'Etoile, from which centre, crowned by the largest triumphal arch in the world, radiates twelve boulevards of surpassing beauty.

"Is not this spot charming to the extent of actual felicity, Carlos dear? Let me know if

you are happy. Touch my hand if you do not want to speak; 'actions speak louder than words,' we are told," said Mrs. B. extending her arm in front of Carl, as he was making for the Arch.

"My mouth is freer than my hands. I am in transports, and want to fly. I used to sing, 'Oh, had I the wings,' etc., but I never expected to wear them in Paris. Just see me make figure eights, and cut magic circles," said Carl, sailing back and forth in quite childish delight around the grand Arc de Triomphe, and finally bringing up by the side of Mrs. B. They set out at good speed to follow her husband and George Morgans down the avenue, which led to the beautiful wooded park.

"Carlos dear, we need not undo ourselves by attempting to follow those eccentric high flyers. We shall know the park when we get to it, and if they leave us altogether, which is not unlikely, we can return by the Trocadéro at our leisure."

"Quite right, Mrs. B. I am at your pleasurable service, and whatever I can do to make you happy, just tickles me to death."

"That is what I should call a maiden speech, ha, ha! It began with such a flourish, and ended so modestly. You are so fresh and original, Carlos dear. You continually charm me."

"I don't mind being called fresh, Mrs. B., that is, if you do not infer that I am quite insipid, without flavor, you understand, but

when you talk about my being girlish, all the manliness in me revolts at the idea, quite angers me, you know. George declares I am a regular little sinner, but if it's original sin—you used the term original, I believe—it's nothing I'm to blame for, that's certain."

"Don't be heretical, Carlos dear. You must believe that you are altogether at fault for Adam's misbehavior, or you cannot feel the terrible load of guilt under which we are all staggering, nor have the proper sense of gratitude for the atonement. You must be a good boy, Carlos dear, and believe everything," said Mrs. B., tapping him playfully under the chin.

"Bother such a code of morals. I've got to have my fun first, whatever comes afterwards. As for believing what I can't, well, that's like a

snake swallowing itself; it simply can't be done."

"Better to believe that a snake *can* swallow itself, Carlos dear, than to become a skeptic. A naughty, wicked, free-and-easy thinker, they are the worst kind of people to manage."

"How did you come to be a bicyclist, Mrs. B., and entertain such horridly old-fashioned notions? Why, the up-to-date woman believes that she was once a monkey, and the men were all Chimpanzees, and Orang-outangs. Aren't monkeys cute, though?"

"No, indeed, the dirty little beasts. I quite abhor and loathe them, but what I do positively admire is a little white curly pig."

"Give me your hand, Mrs. B., we're a tie on pigs; not that I like them personally, oh, no,

quite the reverse, but on financial lines, I may say, they have been the making of our whole family. We were not raised on pigs, that is, we never ate them exclusively, but they raised us, so to speak. The governor was a dealer in pork, you see, that accounts for our being in Europe. Accounts for everything, I may say."

"I knew you were from a high parentage. So your father was a governor. Of what State, may I ask?"

"Oh, no, that's papa in slangy parlance. He never objected to our calling him so, however, rather liked it we thought, it sort of took away the odor of pork, you know."

"I know your mother must have been distingue at all events. Nothing but blue blood, of the very deepest cerulean blue, could ever have

produced this adorable hand, dimpled at every joint; why, I must positively kiss it. I really couldn't help it, Carlos dear."

"You'll have to release my hand, Mrs. B., we're running into quite a tangle, I fear."

"Dear little hand, I hate to let it go."

"Oh, they're not very small, number sevens, you know. My coat sleeves are so deuced big, that's what's the matter," said Carl, jerking his hand away, and wheeling quite to the other side of the avenue.

"You needn't feel so perplexed, dear, no great disgrace to have finely-formed extremities, I should say. Now your feet and ankles," said Mrs. B., following closely.

"By-the-way, Mrs. B., I crossed over to get

a whiff of cigarette, thinking you might object to the smoke, you understand."

"I don't mind the odor, and have no right to object to your smoking, but, Carlos dear, with such teeth, and such a mouth, it does fairly make me shudder to think of polluting them with those vile cigarettes."

"Thanks, Mrs. B., you're awfully good not to object, for the habit is so fixed upon me that my nerves quite require the stimulant. I've been thinking that in spite of prevailing custom, I shall let my mustache grow. I hate to look so effeminate, as I know I must, since so many have remarked it. As my mother was a woman, and I have her style of features, it couldn't be avoided, of course," said Carl, striking a match, as he slowed up and lighted

his medicated cigarette, taking care to avoid the windward side.

"You are in college, I suppose, dear? You must pardon my calling you endearing names, but you do so remind me of Percy, and they seem to belong to you quite naturally."

"Quite excusable, Mrs. B., no one calls me Morgans, that belongs exclusively to George."

"I was asking about your school, dear. What college are you attending?"

"I'm just out of high school, but I'm seriously considering Orchard Lake Military Academy," said Carl, puffing away violently.

"Well, that's too absurdly funny for any use. Exactly what we're contemplating for Percy. Quite near Detroit, you know. Why, I shall

write him immediately. Perhaps you can room together. How lovely!"

"Yes, I should say so, but perhaps you had better defer mentioning it for the present; you see it is not quite settled yet," said Carl, uneasily.

"But we had better settle it right now. I am quite in the spirit of having you room together, your personality is so captivating, and ——"

"Does Percy smoke, Mrs. B.?"

"Oh, dear, no! that might be an objection, but you certainly are going to give up this pernicious habit for my sake, dear. Won't you, please?"

"That is the least in my catalogue of crimes, Mrs. B. I am quite addicted to wine, and as

for poker and baccarat, there's where my pocket money goes. We must not fail to halt at Monte Carlo. I'm dying to try my luck at roulette."

"Why, Carlos dear, you astonish me. I thought you quite innocent of worldly dissipations."

"Oh, that's no sin, trying one's hand, as they call it. In Europe, you know, one can do almost anything—drink beer, wine, champagne, indulge themselves liberally in all directions, for educational purposes, you understand. Now, I'm a moral young chappie, even if I don't swallow original sin, done up in sugar-coated doses; but, in these days, one must have had experience, even at high cost, in order to achieve greatness in any direction. I think I

have made it quite plain to you, Mrs. B.," said Carl, congratulating himself on his depravity dodge.

"I wonder if I could have been so deceived in this young person's innocence," said Mrs. B., aside, biting her lips in a perplexed way.

"There is George, now, he is one of your models. Strange you don't take to him instead of me," said Carl.

"But you have such a sweet mouth, and such eyes. They have penetrated my very soul. Even if I knew you to be all that you have said, still I could not but love you," said Mrs. B., in quite a serious tone.

"You're so awfully sweet yourself, that accounts for your taking a fancy to me. I beg

your pardon, Mrs. Browne, I forgot you were married."

"But the difference in our ages quite admits of your boyish sentiments. Of course I do not take them too seriously, but it quite pleases me to have you speak lovingly. I need it, you know, being starved, as I think I mentioned to you before. Now, there would not be a ghost of harm in your calling me Dearest, if ——"

"May I ask your age, Mrs. B.?"

'Why, certainly. I delight to pour my confidence into your young bosom. I've just turned the hoary corner of twenty-three."

"Nineteen and twenty-three. Well, that done by subtraction would only leave four years; hardly difference enough to warrant ——"

"Do it by addition, Carlos dear, that makes

forty-two. We don't have to subscribe to custom in our adjustment of these little unimportant matters."

"By-the-way, what a crowd we're running into. These dashing French beauties quite unbalance one. My, but they're awfully swell!"

"Enough to turn older heads than yours, Carlos dear. I am persuaded Husband and Mr. Morgans are ogling them."

"A man can't go it blind in Paris, Mrs. B."

"Blind in Paris! Can any one think of a more pitiable condition. One really never knows the commercial value of a good pair of eyes until they strike this city of manifold beauties. I said to Fayette this morning, Now take Morgans around and show him the sights. I thought I might as well consent at the outset,

for their catalogue of sins will suffice without a supplement of lies to answer for."

"You are too indulgent, Mrs. Browne," replied Carl, looking troubled.

"Not any more so than Hubby is to me. 'Now, Dubby,' he replied, 'you do the same by young Carl. Go to the Louvre, the Luxembourg, show him the Bon Marche, take a sail with him on the Seine, go anywhere, do anything you can to make the boy happy.'"

"That's generosity itself," said Carl, righting himself, after dodging a rollicking belle, who turned neither to the right nor to the left, as she spun past."

"Awfully good of Hubby, especially as he must know how delighted I am in your company."

"I hope he don't take George into any bad places, he is a model of goodness and innocence, if he is my brother."

"That remark shows that you are a little bit of a fraud, Carlos dear. It's a naughty thing to dispute your word, but I believe, with all your boasts of dissipation, that you are a pure, sweet creature, and those naughty cigarettes are only cubebs after all, ha, ha, ha! my dear little fraudie," remarked Mrs. B., pointing her finger at Carl.

"You can do as you like about believing me, Mrs. B.," said Carl, tartly.

"Pardon me, Carlos dear. Squeeze my hand just a little bit, that I may feel you forgive me."

"It requires all my attention, about now, to

dodge these flyers. My senses! but look at them coming! You are an adept at wheeling, Mrs. B., or you'd be run over. See ahead! Why, I believe there are five hundred bikes in sight at this minute. I've wheeled at Newport, but this beats any —— Look out there! Can't you keep to the right?"

"Pardonez, Monsieur," said the Frenchman, shooting past like a meteor.

The crowd of cyclers had now become one vast, buzzing swarm of human bees, in which Mrs. Browne and her tender protége, were quite lost. At some distance ahead Browne and the elder Morgans were resting beside their wheels, in a shady nook, on the very outskirts of the Bois de Boulogne Park."

"You have what I call a model wife, Browne,

Most women would insist on riding beside their husbands," said George.

"Oh, Dubby's all right. We've been married five years, more or less, and she don't object to my going out with the boys now and then. Has her own clubs, her own set, and that sort of thing, you know. Now she's just taken with your brother, something to pet and coddle. She's that kind of a woman, motherly. Never having had children of her own, I suppose."

"Too bad she couldn't have had a large family, with such a penchant for pets. Why don't you get her a dog?"

"A dog, ha, ha! Why, bless your heart, she has a dozen of them. Mastiff, King Charley, pugs, a Yorkshire, greyhound, and I don't know what all."

"Why didn't she bring them? We would have made quite a procession, imposing in the extreme," said George, somewhat ironically.

"See here, what in the devil is the matter with you, Morgans? My wife isn't going to corrupt your upstart of a brother!"

"Nothing special the matter with me, Browne. If you're willing to leave them together it's all right, only ——"

"Of course it's all right. Don't be a fool, Morgans, have some style about you. We've come to do Europe, let's do it, and be darned, I say."

"But you are married, Browne ——"

"The devil, I —— Well, what of it, if I am married? That don't count in wicked Paris, pard. But, I say, Morgans, how does it hap-

pen that you're not in it with the rest of us fellows?" You're quite a masher, I vow."

"Thank you. Probably I have never come across the woman who was exactly of your opinion. If I ever do commit the folly it will be for love, and I'll be true to my vows or be hanged," said George, curtly.

"My sentiments exactly, Morgans. Nothing else goes—that is, my second marriage—you tumble?" said Brown, singing:

"'Love, sweet love, is the poet's dream,
Love, sweet love, is the poet's theme
What is love of which they sing?
Only a phantom—unreal thing.'"

CHAPTER V.

THE RIVIERA.

SHIPPING from Paris by rail to Marseilles, our party had again resumed their wheels, and following the shores of the Mediterranean, were now approaching Nice.

The afternoon sun was gilding the minarets of the city with a softened glow, and all the broad expanse of sapphire sea, whipped into frolic by the playful winds, seemed dashed with molten gold, and strewn with crimson plumes. The lanteen sails, like mammoth sea birds, hovered at the shores, or tossed like burnished swans upon the high-borne waves. Along the

beach, the red-cheeked washerwomen gathered their sun-bleached linen, bearing the monstrous bundles lightly on their heads, as hand on hip, they loitered for a friendly chat, or led a band of children to their distant homes.

Mrs. James Montgomery Fayette Browne was wheeling slowly beside her husband, and, following at some distance, came George and Carl Morgans. They seemed in earnest conversation, scarcely heeding the beauties of this Queen City of the Riviera, which, from apparent manifestations, was so entirely absorbing the attention of the foremost couple.

"Now, Carl, remember what I have told you; be very guarded in your remarks to Mrs. B. While I have the utmost confidence in Browne, I am not at all sure of his wife. She

impresses me as one who is playing a part, and to tell you the truth, I don't believe her husband cares a flip for her."

"All the more reason why I should stand up for her. I'm having a jolly time, and as for playing off on us, let her sail in; if she can beat us she's a daisy."

"It's disgraceful, Carl, the way you use slang! You'll have to wear male attire for the rest of your life; you certainly never will have the appearance of a lady again!"

"Now, George, hold on! We've got ourselves into this business, and we must pull through or make a sneak. I prefer the former and whatever is necessary to my part, must bend to my purpose. I've got to use slang, smoke, make love to Mrs. B., and tell lies.

"Of course we must prevaricate to some extent, but let it always be the last expedient, and never in the spirit of willful untruth, Carl."

"If we only knew what they were going to spring on us, so as to be sort of prepared, but they ask the most unthought-of questions! We may congratulate ourselves that during our stay in Paris we managed to elude suspicion and avert a calamity, George."

"I agree with you, Carl; but what troubles me now, is this nonsense between you and Mrs. B. I honestly believe the silly thing is in love with you."

"In love with me? Well that's not bad, seeing the attraction is mutual," said Carl, whistling gaily.

"I can't for my life see what you find cap-

tivating about her, or what possible attraction a woman of her size can have for a boy like you !"

"She's a magnetic woman ! When she touches me with the ends of her pulpy fingers, I can fairly see the sparks fly. She actually casts some magic spell over me."

"Shouldn't be surprised ! That's probably the way she captured her husband, and holds him, now that she has him. Love don't play a conspicuous part in the match, that's certain. If she's that kind of a person, Carl Morgans, you had better keep entirely away from her."

"Oh, don't bother your brains over me. There isn't much danger of anything serious happening between two fond women, I should

say; but beware how you get too chummy with James Montgomery Fayette Browne."

"Too late to sound a danger signal in that direction, Carl. I'm desperately in love with him now; can't help it, if I were to die for it to-morrow. As for Browne, he treats me in the most man-for-man fashion; doesn't care a whit for me, except as a *bon comrade*. Why should he? He thinks I am what my appearance justifies him in thinking, while I, knowing myself a woman, and he a perfect paragon of a man, cannot keep my heart from positively adoring him. Sometimes I think we had better part company and go by ourselves. The outlook is certainly dangerous," said George.

"I can't say that the case is quite so bad on my side. But there's one thing certain, if I

were really a man, Mrs. B. would get a divorce from Browne and marry me."

"Nonsense, Carl; a woman marrying a woman, ha, ha, ha! How perfectly absurd."

"She's not to blame. She thinks I'm a fellow all straight."

"All the more ridiculous. A great mountain of a woman like her in love with a boy half her size, and ten years younger, I'll be bound."

"She's only twenty-three, George; honest."

"I don't care if she were sixteen, she's too silly for anybody's society, and you're a perfect little simpleton to let her touch you. I don't blame Browne for not being tenderly demonstrative over her. I couldn't respect him if I really thought he admired her. He may esteem her

for some good quality. She is generous-hearted, I admit, but ——"

"You're jealous, that's what's the matter with you, George. Mrs. Browne is just as nice as her husband, any day, and if he would treat her with a little more consideration, she wouldn't be so starved for affection as she says she is. I pity Mrs. B., from the bottom of my heart. If he touches her at all, it's a slap here, and a dig there, enough to kill the poor thing."

"Yes, she is delicate, the dear, abused creature."

"You needn't use any of your sarcasm, George. I am Mrs. James Montgomery Fayette Browne's friend, and I shall protect her."

"Your chivalry is quite manly, I declare.

But all the same, I would advise you to drop this sentimental nonsense. It's positively sickening, upon my word, Carl. I should think Browne would pitch you into the Mediterranean. A good cold plunge would do you both good, for that matter."

"Georgiana Morgan! I don't care if I do call you that, you make me so mad. If I were living in a glass house myself, I would be a little careful how I pitched stones at other people. You are the real villain in this play; in love with a married man. I'd be ashamed to own it, if I were you. I wonder what Brother Charles and Blanche would say? My lines are seraphic, compared with yours. Don't preach morals to me, George. Swallow your own sermons, I say."

"What's all this controversy I hear between you boys? Anything gone wrong?" asked Browne, slackening his pace so as to let them come up.

"George is touching me up on my besetting sins, that's all. I've been in the habit of enduring this sort of thing on going to bed and getting up, but these extras are tough on a fellow."

"Come over beside me, Carlos dear. My mantle of charity is broad enough to cover you from all tempests of whatever nature. Is my poor boy being terribly set upon?" said Mrs. B., laying her hand tenderly on Carl's arm.

"Any mantle that would cover your two fat shoulders, Dubby, would make a tent for ordin-

ary mortals. They're not a pinch too broad, though, when it comes to shifting my burdens."

"You're right, Hubby dear. We are a good-sized family when it comes to avordupois, if we don't count many at table. Nature adjusts her balances fine, very fine, Hubby dear."

"Wheel alongside, Morgans. You act kind of offish to-day. What the deuce has happened?"

"Nothing has happened, Browne, only ——"

"That's a likely story, when you've been holding back ever since we started from Marseilles. Out with it, old boy. What's in the wind?"

'Your wife certainly has some claim to your attentions. I don't want to monopolize you altogether, you know."

"Nonsense; she's been as uneasy as a fish out of water—wanted to get with Carl, you understand? You must be stone blind not to see what's going on, Morgans."

"That's exactly what I've been lecturing Carl about. I abhor this familiarity between them, and you're an angel to stand it, Browne."

"Haw, haw, haw, haw! Think I ought to be jealous of that slip of a boy, eh? Ho, ho, ho! Why, Morgans, you don't know Dubby Montgomery Browne, I guess. There isn't another wife in the world like her. The devil! I'd as soon think of being jealous of the man in the moon as Carl. Let them enjoy themselves. It's all right, I tell you."

"I don't believe you love your wife as a husband should, Mr. Browne, or you would have some pangs."

"Dubby and I have a perfect understanding, Morgans. You've given me more pangs than she ever did."

"What are you talking about, Mr. Browne?"

"Pangs, I believe that was the subject," said Browne, biting his mustache, in a thoughtful way.

"How have I given you pangs? Explain yourself," said George, nervously.

"Another day, Morgans. There's a matter of business we'd better settle about now. Shall we stop at Pension Suisse, as I suggested last night?"

"As long as Carl and I have a front room overlooking the blue Mediterranean, that's all we stipulate for. Other arrangements we gladly surrender to your riper judgment and wider experience, Browne."

"Hubby! Hubby, dear! Isn't this a lovely row of palms we're running under?" called Mrs. B., waving her hand over her head in childish enthusiasm.

"The place is quiet," continued Browne, after nodding consent to Mrs. B., "but as long as we've sent our trunks on to Naples, and must put in an appearance in knickerbockers, it may be more comfortable all around to put up there. When I was here four years ago, there wasn't above a dozen stopping there, and they were mostly men. But it is a good, clean place, and first class, so what do we care? Mrs. B. won't kick, as long as she hasn't her fine gowns here to display."

"It will be greatly preferable to the more fashionable hotels, as we are circumstanced. The situation is good, I believe you said."

"Fine, Morgans, couldn't be better. Castle Rock looms up in the background, and about half way up the slope, there is the loveliest little garden with lemon, fig trees, and prickly pears, to say nothing of the dozen or more rose bowers, with pretty rustic seats scattered about. A pretty trellised balcony runs in front of the second-story windows, facing this garden, where one can pick flowers and fruit without the fatigue of climbing the steps from the ground entrance. The front of the hotel, or Pension Suisse, faces the Mediterranean, not fifty feet away. In point of situation, there's nothing finer in Nice."

CHAPTER VI.

POMPEII.

"THAT was a stroke of luck, our getting a sunrise start from Naples this morning. How under heavens we ever got through that solid mass of dirt, donkeys, and darned fools, without getting crushed, will remain a mystery to my dying day. Talk about ragamuffins turning the battle of Bannockburn, why the stiff odor from that street procession of beggars and scavengers, with the effluvium of the ground floors pouring in, would turn the Chicago river green with envy; and if all Naples should take a bath in the Mississippi, the allu-

vial deposit would make dry land a hundred miles to the north of New Orleans."

"Strong statements, Browne," said George Morgans, wheeling to the side of Browne, while Mrs. B. and Carl followed closely after.

The party had lunched at Hôtel Diomède on arriving from Naples, and were now on the main thoroughfare, leading to the exhumed city.

Vesuvius was in eruption, and with the wind blowing from the northwest, a cloud of smoke and cinders made the scene realistic in the extreme, and brought vividly to mind that day of doom, when two thousand souls found a common tomb beneath its burning scoria and ashes.

"Strong, well I should say weak, watery, as compared with the subject matter. I have always thought Providence at fault in raining

destruction on this place, but if the Pompeiians were as dirty as the Neapolitans, it might have seemed a necessity for the All Wise to purify His realm by thus cremating them. A south-east wind may yet clean up Naples."

"But to destroy those chaste and beautiful marbles of Pompeii. How are you going to reconcile this loss with your optimistic philosophy, Browne?"

"I have thought a good deal about that, Morgans; but the very fact of their restoration is a plea for immortality; sort of resurrection from the dead, as it were."

"Quite in my line of reasoning, Browne. Now I believe when a sculptor carves an image, which he has created in his own thought, that there is born a soul to inhabit it, and that is

what appeals to us when we gaze upon the work of Art."

"George believes the "Tinted Venus" story from cover to cover, but you can't stuff me with any such fol-de-rol," said Carl, laughing.

"Well, I never thought much about the matter, but yet it is true they have had to put a railing around the Venus de Milo and the Venus de Medicis, to keep the men, and women, too, from hugging them, and that is a good argument for your side, Morgans," said Browne.

"For my part, I prefer images that have a little caloric and combustion in them, and yet any one can hardly help desiring to lift the auburn veil from the bosom of Titian's Magdalene," said Mrs. B.

"Why, Dubby, I didn't know you had such

abnormal curiosity," exclaimed Brown, in astonishment.

"A woman without curiosity would be devoid of true instinct," responded George, in Mrs B.'s defense.

"Thank you, Mr. Morgans, you must have been a student of woman, or, perhaps, were a woman in your former reincarnation, to speak so advisedly of the general characteristics of woman," said Mrs. B.

"Had I the vocabulary of a Shakespoke," said Browne, rising to such a pitch of enthusiasm with the pressure of some mighty thought within him, that, as he turned suddenly about to address his companions, he did not see his wife, who crashed into him, both falling in inextricable confusion. George, also, closing

in rapidly, fell upon the heap, and Carl closely following Mrs. B., crowned the ash-covered pile with all the beauty and grace of a nineteen-year-old girl in knickerbockers.

As one after another emerged from their entanglement, taking account of bruises, as they flapped the dust from their bedraggled garments, Mrs. B. remarked, affectionately :

"Carlos, are you quite sure, dear one, that you are not injured ?"

Browne, at the same time, was paying little delicate attentions to Morgans, which, in common politeness, should have been tendered his wife ; but no jealousy or ill-feeling resulted from these misalliances.

It was a happy company indeed that cycled into the "voiceless city of a dead past," on this

July morning. Nineteenth Century 'bikes' running over lava pavements where heavy cart-wheels had worn deep ruts, before the world had known a Saviour!

"Fortunate for us, Browne, that you're able to direct us through these deserted streets. Guides are such super-officious, disagreeable things," remarked Morgans.

"I spent a fortnight in this hole on a previous visit to Italy, and as the western boom has not yet struck Pompeii, things are naturally about where I left them. Now this is the house of the rich merchant, Diomed, that Bulwer Lytton tells about."

"Oh, Mr. Browne, where is the house of Glaucus, the poet?" asked Carl.

"Poor Nydia, she was such a beautiful char-

acter, loving as she did so silently and without return," sighed George.

"A good many in the same predicament, Mr. Morgans," replied Mrs. B., significantly.

"Ah, very true, Dubby; you have the penetration of the psychologist," added Browne, looking sharply from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"I wonder whether other persons have been foolish enough to attempt cycling through these humpty-bumpty lanes?" said Mrs. B., quite breathlessly, as she dismounted, walking beside her wheel.

"I can't say as to that, but the novelty is immense," rejoined Carl, taking a header into a pile of debris, as he finished speaking.

"Ha, ha, anything for novelty, Carl," laughed George, who running into a rut plunged headlong in like fashion.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Browne as he alighted from his wheel to assist Morgans to his feet." Mean to laugh at you, but the idea of cycling in Pompeii, is enough to make the Sphinx giggle. Here we are at the House of the Tragic Poet, one of the most elegant little abodes in the city. Here is the threshold, where the dog in Mosaic, and the inscription 'Cave Canem' that we saw in the Museum of Naples come from. At the end of this court is a shrine of the Lares, and these frescoes are the Greek gods, I believe."

"Poor Nydia, how she must have suffered," sighed George, looking about.

"I don't think I would have jumped into the Mediterranean and let Ione have it all her own sweet way with Glancus; not for Joe! Why

didn't Nydia have some grit about her; wait until leap year or something like that, and then try her luck. It's time enough to commit suicide when the chap says nit. I wouldn't give up beaten until I had had a flip at the dice, any way. A woman has just as good a right to tell her love as a man," said Carl, bristling.

"Thank you, Carlos dear. You are quite up-to-date in your sentiments as well as your cravats. I admire you very much, Carlos dear," said Mrs. B., taking his arm as they walked beside their wheels toward the "House of the Faun."

"That shake of the head, together with the tone of voice and advanced ideas, reminded me deucedly of the 'new woman.' What do you think, Morgans?"

"I think Carl is about the most foolish fellow when he gets started on love. That subject completely unbalances him; makes a woman of him, so to speak. But in every other way he is quite as manly as one could desire," replied George, in a nervous way.

"That last remark of George's was a trump. Perhaps I am silly, but it's all owing to my tender years. Mrs. B., you will make allowances, I am sure."

"Any amount of them, Carlos dear. Try my generosity, I quite implore you."

"Have a cigar, Morgans? Take one, Carl?" insisted Browne.

"Thank you, I'm hot enough without smoking. Isn't the heat something terrible?" asked George, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"Thanks, I may take a puff later, but just now something wet would be more in my line. Is there any water to be got about here?" asked Carl.

"Water in Pompeii! might as well look for iced tea in Hades. Here we are in the 'Temple of Jupiter,' and if the thermometer don't stand at a hundred and ten, then I—— Hello, there! Say, you wine peddler, bring that demijohn over this way. Have a drink, Morgans?"

"Your wife first, Browne," objected Morgans.

"She can drink after Carl, it will taste sweeter. Go ahead, Morgans. Here, Carl, won't you drink?"

"But Mrs. B.—your wife," remonstrated Carl.

"Dubby never gets dry; she's too fat."

"Fayette is right, Carlos dear. I never take

my Lacrima Christi without sugar, you know. 'Drink to me with thine eyes,' as the poet hath said. That would be rather difficult, wouldn't it, now? So I say, drink to me with your rosy mouth, and look over the jug at me with your pretty eyes. That's it, dear. Now I will drink sweet wine, where your lips have been, Carlos dear," said Mrs. B., elevating the vessel with muscular agility, and pouring down the beverage at an alarming rate.

"Hold on Dubby, I say. I'm positively famishing," said Browne, snatching the demi-john from his amiable sponse.

"Drink to our healths, Hubby dear," said Mrs. B., smacking her lips.

"Long life to you, and may you never die for want of Capri wine," said Browne, appeasing his thirst generously.

"O-o-o-oh! Ooo—o-o-o-oh!" screamed Carl, grabbing his knickerbockers and mounting a pedestal.

"Good heavens! O-o-o-oh!" yelled George, vainly endeavoring to climb a Corinthian column broken off at least a foot above her head.

"Mars, Venus, Mercury, and the rest of the planets, what in the devil's up?"

"Up! did you say, Mr. Browne?" asked Carl, shaking one foot and then another, and dancing like a mad dervish on the crumbling pedestal.

"Oh! There's another! E-e-e-e! Aren't you frightened to death, Mrs. B?" screamed George, binding her knickerbockers still closer about her slim ankles, and finally mounting a crumbling wall, with wonderful agility.

"I won't stay in this horrid old Pompeii another single minute. Oh, mercy! see that wicked little green thing wiggling around there," yelled Carl.

"It's running up the pedestal. Catch you sure, Carl," said Browne, doubling together with convulsions of laughter.

"There's one after you too, Morgans," exclaimed Mrs. B., quite purple in the face by immoderate laughing.

"Oh, Hel——!" exclaimed George, dropping to the pavement, half dead with fright. Carl had likewise slipped from his high position, and was now holding his knickerbockers high above his knees, and treading about on tip-toe.

"Say, Morgans, you two act like women in a mouse fracas. And right here, I'll bet my bot-

tom dollar, and all my Cripple Creek gold stock, that you're girls. Now, own up. I'll leave it to Dubby if any man on earth was ever known to act in this fashion. You're girls, all right, and I know it," said Browne, nodding his head wisely.

Mrs. Browne was holding her fat sides, which had pains in them from her late convulsions, a look of intense amusement in her eyes.

"Well, I guess not, Mr. Browne," said Carl, sticking his thumbs in his vest arm holes, and strutting up in quite pugnacious fashion. "If you don't stop twitting us of being girls, we part company, so there !"

'That's what I say. Your insinuations are just dreadful; and if they can't be stopped why our self respect will compel us to leave

you. Of course we do enjoy your society very much, but you must know how very humiliating——"

"There's another lizard!" yelled the heartless Mr. Browne, at which alarm both Morgans again mounted their pedestals, screaming wildly, at the same time giving away to a flood of tears.

"See, Dubby, the young men are actually crying. I swear I never saw men shed tears and sop them up in that deucedly pretty way before, did you?"

"No use, girls, that settles it. You might as well own up, first as last," said Mrs. B., coaxingly.

"Well, I don't care; if we're girls Dubby Browne's a man, just the same," said Carl, sniffling.

"Of course he is. No woman on earth could stand still with all these horrid lizards darting about," whined George, defiantly.

"Acknowledge the coin, do you, young ladies? Well, Dubby, you might as well pull off your wig then. Allow me to present Mr. James Montgomery, my law partner, from the beer city of America."

"What, Milwaukee?" asked George in astonishment.

"Are you really a man, Mrs. B.?" asked Carl, in a pleased way.

"A man, and your lover, Carlos dear," said Montgomery, prostrating himself at the foot of the pedestal on which Carl was standing.

"Call me Helena, or Caroline, please. But, dear, it is so sudden."

"Yes, quite sudden, that is, the denouement—but this love has been ripening for weeks. End my terrible suspense by giving me the right to protect you from lizards, toads, mice, Browne there, and all other disagreeable and dangerous things, of whatever name or nature. Will you be my wife, Helena Caroline?"

"Oh, Mr. Montgomery, give me time, a week or more to consider, I beg of you."

"But, dear, it might be thought improper for us to travel together longer, unless we were engaged, you know. And then, Browne might ——"

"Don't worry about my getting into your light, Montgomery. Georgiana has promised to be my wife, as soon as we can be properly divorced, Dubby."

"Well, you're a hustler in the matrimonial exchange, I must say," said Montgomery.

"We'll have a double wedding, George. Won't that be glorious?" exclaimed Helena.

"Oh, my, how that relieves my pent-up emotions!" said Montgomery, rising from his knees and opening his arms as though to embrace the object of his devotion. Come to my heart, my affianced bride."

"But I haven't consented yet," stammered Helena.

"What's that about double weddings, sister?" asked Georgiana, leaning on the arm of Browne, quite as though they had been lovers for years.

"I'm going to jump, James," said Helena, springing from the pedestal into Montgomery's arms.

The party needed nothing further in the way of attractions to render them supremely happy, so after spending an hour or so longer in the ruins, they shipped their wheels, took the cars at Portici, and were soon whirling back to Naples.

CHAPTER VII.

HOTEL VITTORIA.

IT may have been convenient for Proteus to assume whatever form or character he chose, but the young Morgans found it not a little perplexing to be suddenly annihilated and then emerge as butterflies with no chrysalis to mark the mysterious transition.

The young ladies had gone into their brother's house and come forth in male garments without comment; and Montgomery had managed to elude suspicion in the disguise he had assumed; but in a land of hotel registers, suspicious porters, and glib-tongued cabbies, who

always keep an introspective eye on the contents of their vehicles, it was not so easy.

After leaving Pompeii our party had returned to Naples and were now quartered at Hotel Vittoria.

Seated upon a pretty balcony overlooking the Mediterranean, were Montgomery and Helena, enjoying a quiet hour of courtship, Browne and Georgiana having gone for a stroll in the adjacent park.

"I never felt so thoroughly uncomfortable in my life, James. The idea of your having to look at your affianced wife in this kind of a boy's rig. It makes me blush crimson with mortification," remarked Helena, putting her hands to her cheeks and then brushing the short hair from her temples, in a dissatisfied way.

"What do you think of *me*—a man accustomed to the free use of his limbs—dragging this abominable load of finery around for four blessed weeks? If I hadn't fallen in company with you, and been too confoundedly head over ears in love to get away, I should have gotten into my proper habiliments on leaving shipboard. As to your appearance, there is not the slightest cause for you to feel uncomfortable. It is doubtful if I shall ever admire you more than at this moment, attired as you are in these very becoming knickerbockers. I can't say that I like to see you in regulation suit, but it may have to be borne a day or two longer—for dress appearance—until we can turn ourselves, as it were."

"Not if I can manage any way under heavens to get out of it," said Helena.

"That's the trouble, how the disguise is to be thrown off. Now, if you were my size we might change garments; but that's not to be thought of, when I tip the beam at a hundred and eighty, and you at a hundred and twenty-five. No, that scheme won't work," replied Montgomery, kissing Helena's hand, and then placing his arm about her waist.

"It's so foolish, feeling like a girl and yet looking like a fellow, especially when you pet me, James."

"Foolish, well ——! A girl may feel a little embarrassed and abnormal in men's clothing, but a man in petticoats is the 'abomination of abominations.' Helena, my darling, I feel like crawling every time I approach you, a very worm in your presence."

"Dearest, don't talk of worms, I'm as 'fraid as death of them," remonstrated Helena.

"Precious, no. We will leave present conditions and look only upon the flower-strewn pathways ahead. Can you not see, my angel, how everything we touch will be changed, Midas like, into pure, unalloyed bliss? We're happy now, my sweetheart, but these irrepressible sleeves are a blasted nuisance," said Montgomery, giving them a decided thrust of disrespect as he spoke.

"You're not starving now, are you, James? You know how you used to talk to me when you were Dubby Browne?' said Helena, smiling.

"There was more truth in my statements about that time than you suspected, my dear.

The fact is I have loved you from the first moment of our acquaintance."

"And I have loved you, James; but, of course, thinking you were a woman, and believing you thought me to be a fellow, has mixed me up horribly. Even now, I am only half persuaded that you belong soul and body to me, instead of Browne! How I wish it were dark, and you had your coat on instead of ——"

"And you had your coat off, Helena."

"What! in my shirt-sleeves? Please remember that I am not a man, James. Mercy, George, how you frightened me!" said Helena, springing away from her lover, at the entrance of her sister and Browne.

"Sorry to have disturbed your tête-à-tête, sister, but ——" began George.

"Montgomery, old pard, late wife of my bosom, what do you say to getting out of here in the morning? I'm sick of Naples."

"And I'm nauseated of petticoats, Browne. If you can offer any suggestion for getting out of these, I'm right in it, at any cost."

"That's the point, old fellow," began Browne.

"Fayette and I have it all arranged," interrupted Georgiana. "We are to leave on our cycles, and lose our identity somewhere between here and Paris. We can carry our bicycle skirts in our knapsacks, Helena (fortunate we brought them, wasn't it?), and make the necessary additions, without the slightest difficulty."

"Part our hair in the middle, and tilt our caps a little to one side. We can do the girl

act all right, because we're right there, you know. But how's this? I thought we were going to Rome, Florence, and dear, delightful Venice," pouted Helena.

"We can't risk the danger of Roman fever at this stage of the game," dryly remarked Browne.

"Or being lost in the catacombs for an indefinite period. I say, let's all get married in Paris, and then spend the remaining two months of our allotted time in a honeymoon journey. How's that for a programme, Browne?" asked Montgomery, greatly excited.

"I thought of that long ago, but Georgiana will not give her consent to the arrangement. She quite insists that the wedding must take place at her brother's in Chicago. Farther than

this, she stipulates that we must put up at different hotels while in Paris."

"The devil she does! I beg your pardon, ladies, but the idea seems so utterly absurd, after traveling and chumming together for a whole month," remarked Montgomery.

"Now, George, don't be disagreeable and spoil everything by your proper notions; we can't finish our proposed trip in any other way than by getting married, and why not do it, I say? I'm in no mood for going back yet," expostulated Helena, getting very red in the face.

"That's not to be thought of, Helena. Hearts and hands are ours to confer, but when it comes to having the bonds of matrimony solemnized, Brother Charles and Sister Blanche

must stand for us in place of our father and mother. We can purchase our trousseau in Paris, it is quite the proper thing for us to do, but the wedding must take place in Chicago."

"I guess you're right about having brother give us away, but Chicago's nothing to do with it. Send for Charles and Blanche to come here, that's the thing to do, George."

"You're just right, my love. Cable them to meet us in Paris," said Montgomery.

"Two weeks will give them abundance of time to get here. Cable them by all means," insisted Browne.

"Brother Charles knows nothing whatever of our escapade, and I do not intend he ever shall; the right and proper thing for us to do, is to return to America at once. Still if you

insist on finishing our European trip, we will part company with the gentlemen ——"

"That's far enough, George, I don't intend to give up James for any old 'Coliseum,' or 'Bridge of Sighs,' either. 'Where thou goest I will go; and where thou stayest, I will stay; and where thou art buried-ed-est there will I be buried,' ha, ha! I got that out of a Fortune-telling book, but they're my sentiments James, if I did make a mix of it," said Helena, taking Montgomery's hands, that were extended in her direction.

"By the way, Montgomery, when are you going to get that divorce? I swear, I don't want you dragging around as my wife much longer," remarked Browne, in assumed resentment.

"I shall don male apparel in the morning, slip on my woman's rig until I get out of Naples, and then fling femininity to the winds forevermore. I shall jump six feet in my saddle when the flummery goes overboard. Thus will I be divorced from petticoats, and the common name of Browne, at one and the same time," said Montgomery, waving his fat, ring-laden hand, contemptuously.

"I think Browne, with an *e*, quite an elegant name, Mr. Montgomery," retorted Georgiana.

"You're welcome to it, Miss Morgan, but I say, if you have a son, don't call him John of Ossowottomie Browne, please," suggested Montgomery.

"I think it far more *distingué* than Dubby Browne, but it's all a matter of taste, I suppose," said Georgiana, laughing.

"Stop quarreling with George, and talk to me, James. Now when we get to Paris, and have on our own clothes, won't we be supremely happy?" asked Helena, in a half whisper.

"We should be, darling, if we could only be married right away; but if we have to abide by the strict regime of your sister's code of morals, we shall be little short of miserable, I fear. Why is it necessary for you to be governed by her ideas regarding our nuptials? We can slip our heads into the noose, and that will legalize the whole quartette."

"Here's a kiss for that logic, old fellow," said Helena, lifting her mouth coaxingly.

"What's going on over there?" asked Browne, turning.

"We've got it arranged so that we can finish

our trip together in a perfectly legitimate way," said Montgomery, yawning.

"How's that, James?" asked Browne.

"Helena and I are going to get married, and then chaperon you and Georgiana. Wouldn't that be eminently proper, hey?"

"Capital, Montgomery. That's a go, I say. But what says my amiable spouse, that is to be?" asked Browne.

"Oh, give us a starter, George; don't be mean now," said Helena.

"Well, I guess not. You will be married when we are, and not before, Helena."

"Don't be too awfully sure of that, George. When I get into my proper garments again, and really begin to feel that I am James Montgomery's betrothed wife, there's no accounting for what I may do. Is there, dearie?

"I should say not, my queen. Wouldn't it be delightful to spend our honeymoon in Venice, my angel?" asked Montgomery.

"Perfectly lovely, glorious, divine, I say. Now if we should be married in Chicago, we'd have to go to old Niagara Falls, or else have a water trip to Mackinac, put up at the Grand, and buy a lot of those old baskets and Indian relics. I've got more than a bushel now."

"Of course we would dearest, but Helena," began Montgomery.

"Oh, you dear adorable, you do make me so supremely happy. The atmosphere of Venice is full of love, is it not so, James?" asked Helena, looking into Montgomery's eyes.

"If we don't find perfect, unadulterated bliss in Venice we'll go to the Lake of Como and buy a villa, dearest."

"Will we, James? Oh, that will be heavenly," sighed Helena, sinking into her lover's arms, and then springing up in a dissatisfied way.

"What is it, my angel?" asked Montgomery.

"Oh, that old dress. It's brought me down from the seventh heaven about a dozen times. I shall be so glad when you get your coat on, James, then I will be absolutely sure that I am not going to marry a woman. We will be married in Paris; I don't care what George says," said Helena, decidedly.

"You could get a suitable dress between here and Paris, couldn't you? As for me, I'm all prepared to be married any time. Browne, there, has been carting my trunk around for his ever since we started. I shall come into possession of my half dozen suits when we get to Paris.'

"George and I have each a handsome tailor gown with hats to match, and the very swellest of evening dresses, our jewels, and everything we shall need. Of course we had to come prepared for emergencies, for we couldn't tell what minute our sins would find us out."

"How fortunate. Fate has certainly prearranged everything for us. All we have to do is to comply, and won't we comply, my angel? Won't we?"

"You will have to take back what you said about liking me best in knickerbockers, for I shall be perfectly irresistible in pink satin and pearls for our coming out," remarked Helena.

"I never felt the piquancy, and poignancy of that expression before. 'Our coming out,' yes, out of petticoats and pant—— I won't say it,

dear, but the significance is really quite striking. As for knickerbockers, I should admire you, my precious, if you hadn't anything—I mean, in anything. Now pearls would be just lovely on your pink skin, I mean on pink satin. Yes, pearls and pink satin would be very becoming, and bewitching too, Helena."

"You'd better straighten that out, old fellow. I've been awfully clip, I know, and have had to use slang, and smoke cigarettes to carry out my part, but when I change my coat, I hope to grace, instead of disgrace, the position you have given me."

"You certainly cannot be more anxious to demonstrate yourself the true lady than I am to show myself a man of honor, Helena," said Montgomery.

"I overheard that remark, Mr. Montgomery. The wonder is that both you and Fayette do not abhor us for the unwomanly deception we have been practising upon you; but I assure you, it all originated in our desire for novelty and a good time," said Georgiana.

"Why, if Helena hadn't been the most decorous young lady in the world, we should have been out and out lovers two weeks ago, even though I was a much married woman," remarked Montgomery.

"And Georgiana would have eloped with a mis-mated benedict, if she had followed the dictates of her heart, instead of her sense of propriety. Wouldn't you, dear?" asked Browne.

"A man eloping with a man. What are you

talking about, Fayette Browne?" asked Georgiana in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, we knew you two were girls when we met you on shipboard, but I'll admit, we didn't expect to find our wives in this disguise," said Browne.

"Oh, you terrible man to say that," said Georgiana, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, to check the flow of vexatious tears.

"Don't you believe it, George, they never knew we were girls. If they did, and have allowed the matter to go on this far, I will never speak to either of them again, so there!" said Helena, jumping up, and stamping her foot angrily.

"But, dear, there was nothing wrong," began Montgomery, striving to appease her.

"Nothing wrong! Why, everything we have said or done since we left Kansas City is just diabolical. Traveling with you two fellows when we supposed you were man and wife, and we were safe under your protection. I shall die of shame, I know I shall. Boo, hoo, hoo!"

"But, Helena, haven't we been perfectly honorable in every way?" asked Montgomery, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, you've been perfectly lovely, but, dear! dear! the terrible, terrible disgrace," said Helena, still weeping.

"We can never show our heads in Kansas City again, Helena," moaned Georgiana, sobbing convulsively on Fayette's shoulder.

"That is an argument for our being married in Paris, my beloved," pleaded Browne.

"One can do anything in Chicago they can in Paris, Fayette, and I must see Brother Charles before I do another wicked thing. He shall never know how it all came about, though. Dear, dear! How unfortunate, Helena, that we ever planned this disgraceful escapade," said Georgiana, sadly.

"Why, we never would have met James and Mr. Browne if we hadn't, George. It's a horrible thing, but, oh, James," exclaimed Helena, rushing into Montgomery's open arms.

"When we are married, we will all go to Milwaukee to live, and who will be the wiser for our romance? You probably didn't make a public announcement of your change to male attire, Helena," said Montgomery.

"Wasn't that fortunate, George? No one in

the wide world knows it, but Sister Blanche. Dear Blanche! how I wish she could only see how perfectly happy I am."

"Happy, my angel? I thought you were in the valley of despair a moment ago!" said Montgomery, lifting his lovely burden from his chest, and looking into her moist, blue eyes.

"I thought so too, but I'm not. As long as you love and respect me, that's enough. My cup of happiness is running over, that is, it will be, when you get on your coat—and say, James, can't you raise a mustache? It would seem so much more natural, you know," observed Helena.

"What do you know about mustaches, Helena?" asked Montgomery, hurriedly.

"Don't know anything—never came in my

way, except brother's. Probably there's where I got the idea," said Helena, laughing.

"All right, dear, any little thing like that sha'n't come between our happiness, that is, it shall come between our hap—— Now, how am I going to get that straightened out, dear?" said Montgomery, kissing her.

"'Everything cometh to him who waiteth,' or something like that—thay, don't that make me thound tongue tied? ha, ha! Let's go out and take a promenade, James. I can't tell for the life of me whether I'm on earth or in the moon. That was awfully rough on George and I, your passing yourselves off as married folks. I can't get over it, somehow," said Helena.

"The air will clear your brain, dear. Perhaps your sister and Browne will ac——"

"Don't ask them, James," whispered Helena.

"You're very kind, Mr. Montgomery, but as we have so recently enjoyed an outing, I think we would prefer to sit here and gaze," began Georgiana.

"Gaze, ha, ha, ha! That's very good, George," remarked Helena, as she passed with Montgomery into the dimly-lighted corridor, laughing merrily as she went.

CHAPTER VIII.

LA BELLE PARIS.

"FINE hotel this," said Browne, sauntering into the drawing-room of the Continental, a fawn-colored top-coat thrown carelessly over his arm, and a polished silk hat held stiffly in his tan-gloved hand.

"D——d queer, that we've got to be shoved out of this superb hostelry, to humor the caprice of a foolish little woman," remarked Montgomery, dropping his gloves in his high hat, and depositing them with his overcoat and cane on a side table, while he drew himself up to his

full height, and surveyed his elegant personality in the mirror opposite.

"Miss Morgan is exactly right. I honor the stand she has taken in every particular," retorted Browne, decisively, jerking off his gloves, and placing them with his hat and coat on the table beside Montgomery's.

"Pretty nice little girls, I agree with you, Browne. But I say, wasn't it deuced mean for us to impose on those poor innocents. I shall never forgive myself for doing it."

"They thought they were playing it on us pretty slick. An awfully good joke on them, but, as you say, it rather reflects on our honor as gentlemen. Still it's all right now, as it has turned out," said Browne, gazing on a picture indifferently.

"Jehosophat! What a glorious privilege it is to be a man. Talk about fire in Hades, Browne, that isn't in it compared with putting petticoats on a man and compelling him to wear them through all eternity. I feel as though I was just born in another body, I swear," said Montgomery, striking his breast emphatically.

"Oh, come off, Montgomery, you act positively childish over that claw-hammer and wide expanse of shirt front. One would think you were in your first panties ——"

"I swan, Browne, that's exactly how I do feel. There are pants, and there are panties, Browne; but I say, give me pants, or give me rough on rats, ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! Great spree we've had, but married life will sober us up in great shape. By

the way, isn't it about time the ladies were here?" asked Browne.

"Hope they will give us a little time to visit with them before the opera; sort of have a chance to show off, as it were," said Montgomery, consulting the mirror again.

"We are to look upon our prospective wives in dresses, I believe?" asked Browne.

"Yes, and Helena is going to look upon her husband, instead of Dubby Browne; that's where I'm interested. Such a fool as I've made of myself, the devil!" said Montgomery, straightening his cravat.

"Fine grand piano, this. What do you say to giving us a song while we're waiting, Jim?"

"All right, you play the accompaniment and I'll sing; haven't dared to open my baritone

chest since we struck Europe. What shall it be, Browne?"

"Give us 'The Ship I Love,' that's a good one for a starter."

Browne struck the chords boldly, and soon the parlors and connecting corridors were filled with the stirring measures of this popular song. Montgomery was just finishing with the chorus "I've no one to love me," when Helena and Georgiana, with opera cloaks thrown over their arms, burst into the room.

"Seems to me you don't put the soul into that strain the way you used to. What's the matter, waist band too tight?" asked Browne, without looking up.

"Fact is, the darned thing ain't true. I *have* got some one to love me. The last time I sung

that thing, the sentiment was just immense, now it's as flat as uncorked champagne," said Montgomery, turning away.

"Oh, my adorable! My precious man lover! Isn't he handsome?" said Helena, under her breath, as she beheld her lover.

"Good-evening to you, gentlemen," said Georgiana, bowing low.

For a moment Montgomery seemed stunned, and then falling upon his knees he looked up into Helena's face, as though a seraph had fallen from the clouds.

Browne took Georgiana's hand in both of his, then lifting it gently to his lips, pressed it fervently.

"My beloved," he said, "you are the most beautiful woman I ever saw. I cannot believe my senses that you are truly mine."

Montgomery, on the other hand, was acting very foolishly. So great a change had taken place in their appearance, that he deemed it necessary that the momentous question should again be popped, and so he was pleading in quite eloquent language.

"Oh, Miss Morgan! Oh, Helena! My darling! My angel!" when Browne turning suddenly, and being struck with the comicality of the situation, questioned playfully:

"Would you believe your eyes that this gigantic fraud was ever my late wife, Dubby?"

Montgomery was on his feet in an instant, and with a show of resentment snatched a revolver from his back pocket, and towering above Browne, hissed between his half-shut teeth:

"The inferior partner of my late miseries

forgets that in being divorced from his plebian name, I am no longer subject to his unlawful dynasty. Therefore, hear me, this pistol is my talisman. Woe unto him who crosses me in love, or calls me Dubby Browne, world without end."

"Oh, dearest, don't shoot! Put away that ugly thing! I will never dare to embrace you in this wide world if you carry that wicked revolver about you —murder!" screamed Helena, as Montgomery endeavored to approach her.

"That settles it, then! Take the evil weapon, Browne, I've no more use for it! Come to my arms, my angel! Oh, the bliss."

"Fayette, darling one, don't take it, I beg of you! The horrible thing! No, dear, you sha'n't touch me —go 'way! I'll never kiss you again if ——"

"Enough said. I surrender the deadly destroyer of my happiness! Montgomery, receive thine own!" said Browne, handing the revolver.

"Avaunt! Do you not see my hands are completely tied? Love has slain the monster within me; henceforth my mission is connubial felicity—first, last, and all the while!" said Montgomery, striking the pistol from Browne's hand, which goes off with a startling report. Both young ladies mount tables, and scream at the top of their voices.

"Oh, James! Georgiana! Darling! Heavens and earth! Fire, fire, fire!"

"Fayette, my adored one! Helena, oh, oh! Murder, murder, murder!"

"Thunder!" growled Montgomery, holding the calf of his leg as though wounded, and limping about.

"Oh, my head!" groaned Browne, throwing himself on a sofa, as though in great distress.

"My precious one! Jamesey! My soul! My life! Are you really killed?" asked Helena, leaping from the table and prostrating herself before her lover, weeping violently.

"Fayette! Fayette!" was all that Georgiana could say, as she threw herself on the sofa beside Browne and fainted dead away.

"Water, water! A fan! Ring the bell! Oh, my God! I have killed her," breathlessly exclaimed Browne, as he lifted the prostrate form, fanning her with his handkerchief.

Montgomery jerked the bell cord, while Helena, snatching a large feather fan from her opera cloak pocket, rushed to her sister, fanning her vigorously.

"Open your eyes, Georgiana, love. I was only feigning that I was hurt. Forgive me, dearest. Forgive me, I pray," moaned Browne.

"Don't you faint, Helena. I was just fooling, too. Don't faint, dear," exclaimed Montgomery, anxiously.

"You wretch! I wasn't crying, either, so there, the joke is on yourself, ha, ha! Poor sister, she took it quite seriously," said Helena, kissing Georgiana, as she lay motionless, yet with returning color in her cheeks.

"The joke is on you all, except me," said Georgiana, opening her eyes. "I just wanted to know how Fayette would act if I were dying, ha, ha! I would have carried the ruse farther, but was in mortal terror of that water you ordered being dashed over my party gown."

Georgiana now sprang lightly to her feet, while the others looked upon her with astonishment.

"O-o-o-o-o-o-o-oh!" said Helena, Montgomery and Browne in the same breath, each on a different pitch, with crescendo and diminuendo corresponding to the varied emotions.

"Play a two-step, George, I'm dying for a dance with my gay deceiver to make sure that he hasn't a ball in his poor, dear leg. Tra-la-la-la! That's a good one," said Helena, whirling about in Montgomerv's arms to the tune of the "Honeymoon."

"You frightened me nearly to death, darling," said Browne, bending tenderly over Georgiana as she was playing.

"It was too bad, but I knew you were play-

ing it on me, and I had to get even. But, really, I wanted to test your love a little bit. I am just dying to have you adore ——"

Georgiana was interrupted by the appearance of the waiter who had been summoned.

"Bring champagne for four," ordered Browne.

"Make it six," said Montgomery, wiping the perspiration from his brow as he led Helena to a seat.

"You needn't sit down, Helena, you've got to play while Fayette and I have a waltz."

"What do you want, George?" asked Helena, as she seated herself at the piano.

"Give us a 'Blue Danube,' no waltzes like those to put wings on a pair," said Browne, clasping Georgiana to his breast.

"Sorry you haven't music for me to turn. I love to feel that I am of service to you, my angel," said Montgomery, drawing a seat near and fanning quite languidly.

"Put a little more enthusiasm into that fan, then, I'm positively melting," said Helena, as she dashed the keyboard right and left in her own vigorous style.

"Is there a gentleman present by the name of George Morgans?" asked the bearer of a tray, who suddenly appeared in the background.

"Miss Georgiana Morgan is here, what have you?" asked Browne, as he halted in the waltz to interview the intruder.

"Hand it to me, I am called George Morgans. What can it mean?" said Georgiana, taking the

card in her trembling fingers. "Oh, Helena, Brother Charles is in waiting! Good Heavens, what are we to do? Tell him to come up to the parlor, waiter. Fayette, you must go this minute. What are you standing there for?" asked Georgiana, of the stupid bearer of the tray.

"I think that card is for a gentleman, Miss. That's how I heard it," said the waiter, stammering.

"Get along, and deliver the young lady's message, you wretch," said Browne, taking a rapid stride in his direction.

"Oh, Georgiana, whatever are we going to do? Charles has got on to the racket, and he is pursuing us. You know what a fearful temper he has. Murder! but we'll catch it! Run,

James, I wouldn't have him find us here with you fellows for the world. Hurry up, James, go somewhere or hide yourself, I beg of you !" exclaimed Helena, rushing up and down the room as though distracted.

"Do not allow yourself to become so excited, my dear," said Browne to Georgiana.

"Listen to me, Helena," remonstrated Montgomery.

"Here is your hat and coat, Fayette, go, I beseech of you," said Georgiana, wringing her hands.

"Your cane, James; here, take your gloves, they will give us dead away—a kiss? yes, dear, but fly now if you would save us from utter ruin," said Helena, pushing him out.

"This brother must be a terror," exclaimed Montgomery, going.

"I used to know a Charles," began Browne, as he was vanishing.

"I'm so glad they're out of the way," said Georgiana, sinking in a chair.

"Oh, brace up, George, he can't more than kill us—do his worst," said Helena.

"This is the climax of our wrong-doing, Helena,—'Be sure your sins will find you out,' that adage ought to be tacked to the ten commandments. Brother Charles will utterly destroy us with one of his frightful scowls. Oh, dear, oh, dear!" said Georgiana, walking up and down the room.

"He's a terror to snakes, when he's mad, that's sure; but come on, Macduff, I'm ready to be skinned alive, or burned at the stake," said Helena, doubling her fists defiantly.

A lifting of the heavy portieres at the side entrance, and Charles Morgan entered.

"Dear Charles, how lovely!" exclaimed Helena, rushing toward her brother and clasping him about the neck as she stood at his back.

"Forgive us, oh, forgive us, brother," was all that Georgiana could say, as she fell half-fainting in his arms.

"What the dickens is the matter? You girls act ——" began Charles, choking for a full breath in Helena's mad embrace.

"Are you angry, Charles? Do you feel like thrashing George and I within an inch of our lives? Won't you kill us? Tell me, quick, or I'll choke you half to death," said Helena, convulsively.

"Blanche must have been treacherous—must

have told. Oh—ah ; I feel so prostrated !" said Georgiana, sinking a dead weight in her brother's arms.

" Brace up, Georgiana. Loosen your hold on my neck, Helena. Zounds ! would you choke a fellow to death ? Hands off, I say," said Charles, dropping Georgiana in a chair and shaking himself from Helena's arms.

" Don't scold, Charles, we just did it for fun," said Helena, coaxingly.

" Just for a little novelty brother," sighed Georgiana.

" Hold on, now, and let me get a word in somewheres. I'm not angry. What are you girls talking about? Blanche was true blue, but the tailor's bill, that was the Williams, or villain, rather, of this play. Returning from the

ranch, about two weeks after you left, I stepped into the shop to order my spring suit, when an itemized bill was presented to me. I asked for an explanation, and was informed that my wife had been running my credit for four suits of clothes, two of these dress suits at seventy-five dollars apiece, for relatives of hers, living out of the city. I was mad in a minute, and rushing home pounced upon poor Blanche, like a roaring lion. She was terribly confused but refused to explain, saying she had the money, and would pay for the suits at the expiration of thirty days, as agreed.

"I raved and tore around, threatening to bring the matter into court, when the poor girl, fearing a public exposé, had to tell me all about the matter. At first I was absolutely par-

alyzed, to think that my sisters would concoct such a diabolical scheme, but on coming to myself, decided that Blanche and I would put our wheels aboard an Atlantic Broadsider and join you. We left Roy with his old nurse, and here we are in Paris!"

"Blanche here with you!" said both Georgiana and Helena, in surprise.

"Right here in the Continental, and getting dressed for the opera, this minute. But I say, what are you doing in girls' clothes? Blanche has her male fixings along, and was going to be a man, after we got started on our tour. Of course we didn't know where we should come across you. Explain yourselves, haven't you been passing as two fellows?"

"Come and sit down, Charles, and I will tell

you," said Georgiana, leading the way to the sofa.

"Let me take your hat, brother," said Helena, swinging his hand, with free arm movement, as they walked along.

"In the first place," began Georgiana, seating herself beside her brother, "we met a lovely gentleman and his wife on the steamer, who were going to make a tour of Europe on their wheels, the same as we. They took a decided fancy to Helena and I, and invited us to join them, and we, thinking of their protection, quite naturally accepted ——"

"Quite naturally. A good thing," remarked Charles.

"They were just lovely people, and we didn't know ——" began Helena, who had seated herself on a hassock at their feet.

"Now you keep still, Helena. I will tell Charles," said Georgiana, anxiously.

"What was it you didn't know, Chick? That's the knob of the whole teapot, I'll warrant you," said Charles.

"You're not far astray, but George is telling the story," said Helena.

"As I was saying, we consented, and started to wheel right here in Paris. From the first Mrs. James Montgomery Fayette Browne ——"

"Glory! What a name!" exclaimed Charles.

"Showed a decided liking for Helena, or Carl, as we called him ——"

"And Georgiana was just as desperately in love with Mr. Browne," interrupted Helena.

"Horrible! Can't account for such irregularities," demurred Charles.

"It wasn't irregular. Don't get angry, brother, it all comes out just fine," explained Helena.

"Well, things kept going on until one day we were all in Pompeii, doing the ruins, you know," continued Georgiana.

"And the funniest thing, brother. Just those frightful little lizards did the whole business," said Helena.

"Did what? Hurry up, Georgiana. Helena will get there first, if you don't hustle."

"I think she's awfully mean. Well, we were in the 'Temple of Jupiter' when the denouement came. And just because of those dirty little green lizards. Those two fellows found out we were girls."

"Two fellows! I thought it was a man and his wife," said Charles, angrily.

"We thought so too, but they were deceiving us. Mrs. Browne was a man."

"The devil she was! That put you in a nice fix, I should say. So you two girls traveled around with these two men. Heavens and earth! How long? It won't be well for their mutton if I find them, the villains!" said Charles, purple with rage.

"We traveled together about a month, and then ——" ventured Georgiana.

"A month! D——d pretty mess, I must say," said Charles, pacing the floor.

"But, brother, we are going to marry the fellows," interposed Helena.

"What? You'll do nothing of the kind! States Prison is too good for the rascals. They ought to be tarred ——"

We'll have to marry them, brother, because we've promised to," said Georgiana.

"The impudence of the monsters! The burning shame and disgrace," said Charles, growing more excited.

"That's it, Charles, we've got to marry them to get rid of the shame and disgrace," said Helena.

"Bosh! Where are these monsters in human form? Are they in Paris?" asked Charles.

"We're expecting them here any moment to take us to grand opera," said Helena, trying to lay her hand on her brother's arm to quiet him.

"We'll have grand opera right now; and by George! here's a thirty-eight calibre revolver to do the business," said Charles, picking up the revolver lately dropped.

"Charles, I beg of you, wait until you see them," pleaded Georgiana.

"Quite naturally; but they must die, the villains!" said Charles, examining the chambers of the weapon.

The words had barely escaped his lips before Browne and Montgomery entered.

"James, my darling, let us die together!" said Helena, embracing Montgomery.

"Fayette, stand behind me. The ball that pierces your heart must first go through my body," said Georgiana, standing in front of Browne, heroically.

"Well, I'll be captured and thrown overboard, eaten up by a whale, and made over into sperm candles, if this don't beat the world's record," said Charles Morgan, dropping the revolver and striding at great lengths toward the intruders.

"Charlie Morgan, my college chum! Is it possible you are ——" began Browne, shaking the extended hand heartily.

"Chump Morgan, shake. If you don't want me for a brother-in-law, shoot me on the spot. I'm prepared for my end right now," said Montgomery.

"Here's another victim, meek as a lamb, and twice as innocent. The fact is ——"

"No explanations, Fay. I've heard all about it, and I must say, if two sheep ever deserved to be slaughtered, it's you and Jim Montgomery."

"Oh, Brother Charles, we were the most to blame," pleaded Georgiana.

"I was the projector of the whole affair," said Helena.

"Hush up, girls. Whatever Fay Browne and Jim Montgomery, law partners of Hop City, want at my hands, is theirs for the asking. Why, I wouldn't have had Blanche, if they hadn't helped us elope. Remember that night, Jim? Wasn't that a storm for your life?"

"Thunder and lightning wasn't a circumstance to the tempest old Atherton was in," replied Montgomery.

"Didn't he put the old gray through for all she was worth, though? And you two sinners tucked away in the preacher's best room, waiting for the storm to subside, so that Jim and I could row you across to Tuckerville, instead of taking the cars at the regular station. Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Browne.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Morgan and Montgomery in chorus.

"Do I understand that you consent to our marriage with these gentlemen, brother?" asked Georgiana, timidly.

"Has a stone wall got to fall on you, sister? Of course I consent, and where I said d——n it, ten minutes ago, I now say, God bless you, and long years of happiness," said Charles, waving his hand by way of emphasis.

"Where is Blanche, Charles? I can't wait another instant," said Helena, starting.

"Here she is now. Blanche, did you ever see these two rascals before?" asked Charles, pointing in the direction of Browne and Montgomery.

"Why, Mr. Montgomery! why, Mr. Browne!" said Blanche, giving her hand somewhat timidly to each in turn.

"Why don't you call 'em Fay and Jim, as you used to, Blanche? Might as well begin, they're going to marry the girls," said Charles.

"They are? Why, how sudden. You dear girls. Is it really true that you are going to marry these old school chums of ours? How lovely! But why haven't you got on your ——"

"Hush, Blanche. We'll explain later," said Georgiana, going back to her place beside Browne.

"How soon are these weddings to come off, I would inquire?" asked Charles.

"That's for you and Blanche to say, brother," replied Georgiana.

"Say within two weeks, Charles, please," whispered Helena.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do, and make it

in the shape of a business proposition. Blanche and I started out to have a lark, the same as you girls, and we don't propose to give it up. We'll consent to your marriage with these rascals, and give you away any time you propose, provided you two girls will don the pants again."

"O—oh! brother, don't," remonstrated Georgiana.

"Anything but that," exclaimed Helena.

"All right, girls, just as you say. We go back to Chicago," said Charles.

"Go on, Charles. We'll do it. We'll do it," said Georgiana and Helena at once.

"Don't interrupt me again, then. As I was about to say, I've got a man's rig in my trunk for Blanche.

"Isn't that dreadful?" remarked Blanche, blushing.

"Now you've got to interfere. Have I the floor, boys, or shall I sit down?" asked Charles, playfully.

"Go on! go on!" chimed a quartette of voices.

"As I remarked, I have a suit in my trunk for Blanche."

"Are they awfully uncomfortable, girls?" whispered Blanche.

"There you go again. Will this house please come to order. I have a suit in my trunk for Blanche (any remarks? then I'll go on), and we can all take a bicycle tramp together as six bachelors of uncertain ages."

"I don't have to put on petticoats, then?

Of course not. What was I thinking about? You'll put on those dear little knickerbockers again, won't you, pet?" asked Montgomery, persuasively.

"Pants again? It makes me faint to think of it. But of course I consent," said Helena.

"There isn't any other way out of it, as I see," said Georgiana.

"They must be very uncomfortable the way you girls act," remarked Blanche.

"Not so uncomfortable as embarrassing before marriage, you understand, Blanche?" said Georgiana, in a low voice.

"Now, get your wedding fixings going, girls. Make short work of it, I say," remarked Charles.

"We shall have our honeymoon tour, after

all. Isn't that glorious?" said Browne, clasping Georgiana about the waist.

"A bride in Venice! Isn't that the climax of bliss, James?" said Helena, looking into her lover's eyes with a languishing expression.

"The carriages are now in waiting, gentlemen," said a bell boy, appearing and then disappearing as suddenly.

"The opera! Bless my heart, yes. We came near forgetting every breath about it," said Helena, rushing back for her cloak.

"To be sure, the opera, Charles," said Blanche, throwing a lace point about her head and shoulders.

"Thank you, Fayette," said Georgiana, creeping into the elegant gray and gold brocade mantle, which her lover held to wrap about her beautiful shoulders.

"Sorry to cover you up, sweet, but you look heavenly in this blue and silver, with the ermine about your throat, Helena," said Montgomery, standing back to admire his lady.

"All ready, are we?" asked Charles, after assisting the gentlemen to don their coats.

"All ready, I believe," remarked Browne.

"Well, I'll just add, for the benefit of any newspaper reporters who may be concealed in these draperies, or abiding in the panels of this wainscoting, that when the public hear of a bachelor sextette doing Europe, they may draw their own conclusions."

THE END.

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